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BATTLE SUMMARIES

No. 15.—NAVAL OPERATIONS OFF CEYLON 29th MARCH to 10th APRIL, 1942.

No. 16.—NAVAL OPERATIONS AT THE CAPTURE OF DIEGO SUAREZ (OPERATION "IRONCLAD") MAY, 1942.

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NAVAL OPERATIONS OFF CEYLON, 29th MARCH to 10th APRIL, 1942

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ABBREVIATIONS

A/A	Anti-aircraft.	F.A.A.	Fleet Air Arm.
A/S	Anti-submarine.	H.A.	High angle.
A.S.V.	Air-Surface Vessel (radio-detection).	H.E.	High explosive.
B.S.	Battle Squadron.	R.A.(A)	Rear-Admiral, Aircraft Carriers.
		R.D/F.	Radio direction finder.

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NAVAL OPERATIONS OFF CEYLON 29th MARCH to 10th APRIL, 1942

1. Introduction. (Plan 1)

The close of the first quarter of 1942 was among the most critical and anxious periods of the war in the Far East. Following the fall of Singapore on 15th February, the rapid tale of Japanese successes had culminated in the surrender of Java on 9th March. A day previously Rangoon had been occupied, and by 25th March the situation in Burma and north-east India had seriously deteriorated, as the result of the seizure of the Andamans and of enemy action against the scanty British air forces. It was known that Japanese air forces in this region had been strongly reinforced, and heavily outnumbered the British.[1]

Four thousand miles to the east, Japanese landings had taken place at Salamoa and Lae in New Guinea, and at Port Moresby bombing—hitherto the precursor of invasion—was of daily occurrence. Port Darwin and airports in Western Australia had suffered air raids, and attacks were developing on the Solomon Islands.

Would the enemy strike at India, or Australia, or both ?

The naval situation, from the Allied point of view, was at its lowest ebb. Following the disastrous Battle of the Java Sea (26th/27th February), surviving naval units had withdrawn to Colombo or Australia. The U.S. Pacific Fleet, still licking the wounds inflicted on it at Pearl Harbour in December, would not be ready for offensive operations for some months, and Japanese control of the south-western Pacific was, for the time, complete.

On 24th March[2] Admiral Sir James Somerville[3] arrived at Colombo to relieve Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton[4] in command of the Eastern Fleet, which was gradually assembling as ships became available, and at this time consisted of five battleships, three aircraft carriers (including the *Hermes*, temporarily attached), 7 cruisers, 16 destroyers and three submarines (*see* Appendix A). Within a week of Admiral Somerville's arrival, the Japanese launched a heavy attack by surface vessels and aircraft on shipping in the Bay of Bengal, concurrently with a submarine offensive on the west coast of India, and carrier-borne air raids on Colombo and Trincomalee. These attacks, which cost us two 8-in. cruisers, an aircraft carrier, three light craft and nearly 150,000 tons of Allied merchant shipping, and the resulting operations of the Eastern Fleet form the subject of this Battle Summary.

[1] For example, the British raided Mingaladon airfield (north of Rangoon) on 21st March with maximum available effort—eight bombers and 10 fighters. The Japanese retaliated with four raids by 60 bombers and over 40 fighters each.

[2] On the same day, responsibility for the conduct of the war as between the British Empire and the United States was broadly apportioned as follows :—Pacific theatre (including the Americas, China, Australia, New Zealand and Japan, but excluding Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula) to the United States. Indian Ocean and Middle East theatres to the British. European and Atlantic theatre, joint British and U.S.

[3] Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O. Rear-Admiral V. H. Danckwerts, C.M.G., arrived a week later as his Chief-of-Staff ashore at Colombo (later Deputy C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet).

[4] Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, K.C.B., D.S.O., had been appointed temporarily in command of the Eastern Fleet after the demise of Admiral Sir Tom Phillips in December, 1941. On 10th March, 1942, he had assumed duty as C.-in-C., Ceylon, concurrently with the command of the Fleet pending the arrival of Admiral Somerville. Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Arbuthnot, K.C.B., was C.-in-C., East Indies, and Deputy C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet (flag ashore at Colombo) ; this appointment subsequently lapsed and the command of the East Indies station was merged with that of the Eastern Fleet on 18th June, 1942.

2. Disposition of Eastern Fleet, 26th March, 1942

When Admiral Somerville assumed command, the Fleet was disposed as follows. The battleship *Warspite* had arrived two days previously from Fremantle at Trincomalee, where were also the *Hermes*, with the destroyer *Vampire* and the cruisers *Emerald* and *Heemskerck* (Royal Netherlands Navy).[1] The aircraft carrier *Formidable*—in which Admiral Somerville had taken passage from the United Kingdom—was at Colombo with the cruisers *Cornwall, Dorsetshire* (refitting), *Enterprise, Dragon, Caledon* and six destroyers, and the battleships *Resolution, Ramillies, Royal Sovereign, Revenge* (3rd Battle Squadron), the carrier *Indomitable* and eight destroyers had arrived at Addu Atoll (Maldive Islands) within the previous week, and were working up under Vice-Admiral Willis.[2]

3. Air Attack on Ceylon imminent, 28th March, 1942. (Plan 2)

At 0800,[3] 26th March, Admiral Somerville hoisted his flag in the *Warspite* as Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Fleet. Less than 48 hours later, on 28th March, he received a report of a Japanese force indicating an intention to attack Ceylon by air about 1st April. The probable force was given as two or more carriers, two large 6-in. cruisers, possibly several 8-in. cruisers and a large number of destroyers. Battleships of the *Kongo* class might be in support.

The Commander-in-Chief's appreciation was that the enemy's most likely target would be Colombo and/or Trincomalee—probably both ports simultaneously. Three methods of carrying out these attacks were possible, viz., moonlight attack followed by moonlight landing on carriers, moonlight attack followed by dawn landing, or daylight attack.[4] The second of these methods was considered the most probable, and it was thought that the approach would be made from the south-east.

The Commander-in-Chief therefore decided to concentrate his fleet on the evening of 31st March in a position from which he could launch an air attack on the enemy force during the night.

Force "A," a fast division composed of the *Warspite, Indomitable, Formidable, Cornwall, Emerald, Enterprise* and six destroyers, was to operate under his immediate orders, while Force "B," consisting of the remainder of the Fleet,[5] under Vice-Admiral Willis, kept within supporting distance to the westward of him.

Catalina patrols were arranged to a distance of 420 miles from Colombo, between the bearings of 110° to 154°, to locate the Japanese raiding force. It was, of course, realised that the enemy might approach from any direction from north-east through south to south-west, but as there were only six Catalinas available (plus one in reserve) not more than three could be on patrol at the same time.

4. Movements of Eastern Fleet, 30th March/4th April, 1942. (Plan 3)

The *Warspite* wearing the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, left Colombo during the forenoon of 30th March and, with the *Formidable, Cornwall, Enterprise, Caledon, Dragon* and five destroyers, steered to rendezvous with Vice-Admiral Willis in position Lat. 4° 40′ N., Long. 81° 00′ E. (80 miles

[1] The cruiser *Heemskerck*, destroyer *Isaac Sweers*, and eight submarines of the Royal Netherlands Navy were operating under the command of the C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

[2] Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, C.B., D.S.O., V.A. 3rd B.S. and Second-in-Command, Eastern Fleet.

[3] Zone F (−6) time is used throughout except where otherwise stated.

[4] Full moon, 1st April. Sunrise 0559, 1st April.

[5] *See* Appendix A (2).

198° from Dondra Head (the southern point of Ceylon), at 1600 next day. The *Hermes*, with her attendant destroyer the *Vampire*, and the *Emerald* and *Heemskerck* sailed from Trincomalee for the same rendezvous.

At 0100, 31st March, Japanese submarine patrols were reported on an arc 360 miles from Colombo between the bearings of 090° and 140°. The Commander-in-Chief came to the conclusion that these were intended for the double purpose of providing reconnaissance and of serving as a screen through which their Ceylon raiding force would withdraw after the attack. An Albacore from the *Formidable* was flown ashore to request the Deputy Commander-in-Chief to arrange a patrol from 090° to 110°, in addition to the Catalina patrols mentioned in Section 3.

Meanwhile Vice-Admiral Willis, with his flag in the *Resolution*, had sailed from Addu Atoll at 2330, 29th March, with the 3rd Battle Squadron, *Indomitable* (flag, Rear-Admiral Boyd[1]) and nine destroyers. The rendezvous was effected during the afternoon of 31st March, and the disposition in two forces taken up; Force "A" (*Warspite*, the two large carriers, *Cornwall, Emerald, Enterprise*) screened by the destroyers *Napier, Nestor, Paladin, Panther, Hotspur* and *Foxhound*, and Force "B" (3rd Battle Squadron, *Hermes, Caledon, Dragon, Heemskerck*), screened by the *Griffin, Decoy*,[2] *Norman, Fortune, Arrow, Scout, Vampire* and *Isaac Sweers*.[3]

Two considerations governed the movements of the Fleet during the night of 31st March/1st April:—(*a*) the necessity of avoiding the enemy's daylight search area till after dark,[4] in order to achieve surprise, and (*b*) to be at a convenient distance from the enemy's probable position for flying off aircraft for the attack. This position—roughly, equidistant from Colombo and Trincomalee—was estimated as Lat. 5° 20′ N., Long. 82° 55′ E. (120 miles from the position of the Fleet at 1800, 31st March).

Force "A" steered to the northward till dark and then 080° at 15 knots. Continuous A.S.V. search was maintained ahead, and to the southward throughout the night. The enemy's estimated flying-off position was reached at 0230, 1st April; nothing was sighted, and course was altered to the south-westward to withdraw outside the enemy's search area. Force "B" conformed, keeping some 20 miles to the westward and rejoining the Commander-in-Chief at 0800, 1st April.

During 1st April the Fleet cruised in the area to the southward of Ceylon; at noon the flagship's position was Lat. 4° 43′ N., Long. 80° 53′ E.[5] In the course of the afternoon the *Dorsetshire* joined Force "A" from Colombo, having abruptly stopped her refit in order to take part in the operation.

[1] Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C. (R.A. (A) Eastern Fleet).

[2] The *Decoy's* main feed pump broke down next morning, 1st April, and she was detached to Colombo for repairs.

[3] The newly assembled Fleet had hitherto had no opportunity of exercising together as a whole, and could not be considered as fully trained. Vice-Admiral Willis remarks:—"It was fortunate that the 3rd Battle Squadron and destroyers in company had, at any rate, three days' training and working together before being called on by the Commander-in-Chief to join him in active operations. This period was invaluable, and the force was at least reasonably efficient at manœuvring, though in other respects it was largely an unknown quantity to me. . . ."

[4] Sunset 1809, 31st March.

[5] A wide diverging air search to the east and south-east to supplement the Catalina patrols from Ceylon was carried out for 4 hours during the day. Similar daylight searches, and all-night A.S.V. searches ahead of the Fleet, were carried out on each succeeding day at sea.

Similar movements, but in different waters to the sweep of the previous night, were carried out during dark hours of 1st to 2nd April: still nothing was sighted. During 2nd April the fleet manœuvred about 50 miles to the westward of the area in which it had operated on the two previous days, in order to keep clear of any submarines which might have sighted it. Several of the destroyers completed with fuel from the 8-in. cruisers and the fleet oiler *Appleleaf*, which had been previously ordered to the vicinity. At noon, 2nd April, the *Warspite* was in position Lat. 5° 07′ N., Long. 80° 59′ E. The Commander-in-Chief's appreciation at this time may be summarised as follows:—

The Fleet had been operating for 3 days and 2 nights off the south coast of Ceylon, and the probability of its location by submarines was increasing. No further information had been received indicating the likelihood of air attack on Ceylon in the immediate future. The Japanese timing might have been upset, or they might be aware of our Fleet concentration and be waiting till it had returned to harbour for fuel; or again, the British deductions might have been wrong from the start. The ships of the 3rd Battle Squadron were running short of water.[1]

On the strength of these considerations Admiral Somerville decided to carry out a smaller sweep to the eastward than on the two previous nights, and if nothing was sighted to abandon the operation. Once again the sweep was fruitless, and at 2100, 2nd April, course was shaped for Addu Atoll. At 0520, 3rd April, the *Fortune* was sent to the assistance of S.S. *Glen Sheil*,[2] reported torpedoed in Lat. 0° 48′ S., Long. 78° 35′ E., and during the forenoon the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall* were detached to Colombo—the former to carry on with her interrupted refit, and the latter to escort a convoy—and the *Hermes* and *Vampire* to Trincomalee to prepare for a special operation[3] in which they were to take part.[4]

Force " A " arrived at Addu Atoll at 1200, 4th April, and Force " B " at 1500 that afternoon. An hour later a Catalina sighted large enemy forces steering to the north-westward in Lat. 0° 40′ N., Long. 83° 10′ E. (360 miles 155° from Dondra Head). At this time, owing to the limited number of oilers available, Force " A " had only taken about half the fuel required, and Force " B " had not yet commenced fuelling. Force " A " (except the *Enterprise* and *Emerald*, which would not be ready till about midnight, 4th/5th April) could proceed to sea immediately, but Force " B " could not leave before 0700, 5th April, at the earliest. Four possible courses of action were considered by the Commander-in-Chief.

(i) Force " A" (less *Emerald* and *Enterprise*) to proceed immediately at best speed to the area south of Ceylon, being joined there by the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, and attack any enemy forces located.

(ii) Delay sailing Force " A " till the *Emerald* and *Enterprise* had finished fuelling, and then sail about midnight, 4th/5th April, Force " B " following on the morning, 5th April.

(iii) Delay sailing Force " A " till both forces could sail together.

(iv) The Fleet to remain at Addu Atoll and leave the Ceylon air forces to deal with the enemy as best they could.

[1] The C.-in-C. remarks:—" The Vice-Admiral, Second in Command, had informed me at the beginning of the operation that 3 days was the limit of the endurance of the " R "Class for this reason. These ships still had ample fuel to remain at sea for a further period and it was an unpleasant surprise to me to find that the supply of fresh water was now the factor which limited their endurance at sea. This was in part due to the failure of a water tanker to arrive at Addu Atoll."

[2] Eight-eight survivors were rescued and taken to Addu Atoll.

[3] Operation Ironclad—Occupation of Diego Suarez, Madagascar. *See* Battle Summary No. 16.

[4] The C.-in-C. subsequently stated that he was by this time convinced that something had occurred to delay the Japanese air attack on Ceylon, or that their objective had been incorrectly appreciated.

The choice of plan was governed by the following considerations:—

(i) The total defence of the Indian Ocean and its vital lines of communication depended on the existence of the Eastern Fleet. The major policy of keeping this Fleet " in being "—already approved by the Admiralty—was paramount.

(ii) The only hope of dealing the enemy an effective blow was by means of a carrier-borne striking force, preferably at night. To operate the carriers escorted by the *Warspite* out of supporting distance of the 3rd Battle Squadron in any area where enemy battleships might be encountered would offer the Japanese an opportunity to cripple our only offensive weapon.

(iii) Interception of the enemy either before or during the anticipated raid on Colombo on 5th April was not possible, but the shore-based aircraft at Ceylon might damage some of the enemy ships, which could be attacked later, or something might occur to postpone the Japanese air raid for 24 hours.

Taking everything into consideration, the Commander-in-Chief decided to adopt the second alternative and to leave Addu Atoll with Force " A " during the night, as soon as the *Emerald* and *Enterprise* were fuelled, Force " B " following when ready.

5. Air Attack on Colombo, 5th April, 1942

The news of the enemy approach was received at Colombo soon after 1600, 4th April, in a report from a Catalina timed 1005Z.[1] The original warning had proved correct, save in the matter of timing, and little doubt now existed that a heavy air attack must be faced the next day. The Eastern Fleet was 600 miles distant, short of water and fuel, and could by no possibility intervene.

At Colombo steps were immediately taken by the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, to disperse the merchant shipping in harbour.[2] Twenty-five merchant ships, accompanied by the *Shoreham*, *Marguerite* and *Clive* as A/S protection, sailed to the westward that evening, with orders to keep to the northward of a line 250° and to return after 1400 next day (5th April). This left 21 merchant vessels and eight small Fleet auxiliaries in harbour, besides the submarine depôt ship *Lucia*, the armed merchant cruiser *Hector*[3] (which had just undocked), the destroyers *Tenedos* and *Decoy*, and the submarine *Trusty*, all of which were unfit for sea owing to defects.

The *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, which had arrived at 1000 that forenoon, were ordered by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, to sail at 2200, 4th April, and to make good a course of 220° (towards Addu Atoll) at 22 knots.[4] The *Hermes* and *Vampire* were ordered to leave Trincomalee when complete with fuel, and steer to the north-eastward; and the minelayer *Teviot Bank*, the corvette *Hollyhock* and four auxiliaries which were at anchor in Palk Bay were ordered to sail to the northward.

[1] No amplifying report was received and it was presumed that the Catalina was shot down.

[2] A dispersal of merchant shipping from the port of Colombo, which was very full, had been commenced on 31st March, as the result of reports of Japanese units, including aircraft carriers, in neighbouring waters. Thirty-six ships were sailed in small groups to previously selected anchorages, two off Ceylon, 80 and 130 miles north of Colombo respectively, and six round the southern tip of India, at Aleppi, Quilon, Travandrum, Kolachel, Tuticorin and just east of Cape Comorin. (*See* Plan 2.) Twenty-three others (particularly important ships) were sent to Cochin, and certain ships at sea approaching Colombo were diverted there. By 4th April six ships had returned to Colombo, either for working cargoes, or because their fuel or water was running short, and there were 46 ships in harbour when the enemy report came in.

[3] The *Hector* was in process of being re-converted for trade.

[4] Thereby anticipating orders received from the C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, about 0400, 5th April.

Throughout the night of 4th/5th April, various enemy reports were received from the Catalinas on reconnaissance. It was not easy to assess the enemy strength, but it was clear that considerable forces were steadily approaching Ceylon from the southward.[1] At 0648, 5th April, a battleship and two cruisers—subsequently amended to two battleships, two cruisers and destroyers—were reported steering 290° in Lat. 4° 00′ N., Long. 80° 40′ E. (120 miles south of Dondra Head), and an hour later, just before 0800 on Easter Sunday, 5th April, the expected attack developed.[2] It was concentrated on Colombo and carried out by about 70 Navy type 99 two-seater dive-bombers. Both high level and dive bombing attacks were made, the targets being shipping, the harbour area, the racecourse and Ratmalana aerodrome.

Thanks to the evasive action taken, shipping losses were light. The *Hector* was hit by four bombs and set on fire[3]; she sank at her mooring in 38 ft. of water with her upper deck awash. The *Lucia* was hit by one bomb forward, which after passing through two decks and the ship's side, burst outboard below the waterline, causing a hole 20 by 18 ft.[4] The *Tenedos* was sunk by two direct hits aft, after a near miss astern and another abreast the foremost funnel. Three of her officers out of six, and 30 men were killed; apart from this, loss of life in the raid was extremely small.

Only one merchant ship was hit—the S.S. *Benledi*, which was set on fire by a direct hit on the poop. The fire was fought most gallantly and extinguished by the ship's officers, aided by those of S.S. *British Sergeant*.[5] Serious damage was suffered by harbour workshops, and railway workshops were slightly damaged. The damage to the aerodrome was negligible; all British aircraft were either dispersed or airborne before the raid developed. By 0929, 5th April, the attack was over. Commenting on it, the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, remarks that the bombing was accurate and directed at military objectives; civilian casualties were slight.[6]

The recently strengthened air (*see* Appendix B) and ground defences[7] scored a distinct success, 33 Hurricanes and Fulmars of the R.A.F. and F.A.A. accounting for 19 certain, 7 "probables" and at least 9 damaged, while A/A fire brought down 5 of the attacking aircraft.[8] British losses in aerial combat amounted to 16. In addition, 2 Catalinas on reconnaissance, and 6 Swordfish on passage from Trincomalee to Colombo, were unfortunately intercepted and shot down. Ten Blenheims were sent off at 0900 as a striking force to the southward, but owing to low cloud and thunderstorms they were unable to make contact with the enemy surface forces.

[1] 2237, 4th April: One destroyer in Lat. 1° 59′ N., Long. 82° 20′ E., course 315° 20 knots. 0045, 5th April: Six destroyers in Lat 2° 54′ N., Long. 82° 10′ E., course 325° 21 knots. 0648, 5th April: One battleship, two cruisers in Lat 4° N., Long. 80° 40 E., course 290°. 0845, 5th April: 0648 report amended to two battleships, two cruisers and destroyers.

[2] The R.D/F system was at this date still in process of installation, and no indication of the approach of the enemy aircraft was received until they were actually sighted.

[3] In spite of all efforts to control it, the fire gained ground, and the oil fuel burned for about 14 days, at the end of which time the ship was deemed a total loss.

[4] Temporary repairs were completed by 20th April, and she proceeded to Bombay for permanent repairs.

[5] Subsequently sunk off Trincomalee, 9th April, fortunately without loss of life. (*See* Section 9.)

[6] The effect of the raid, nevertheless, was an enormous exodus of people from Colombo, and work in the harbour, workshops, etc., suffered seriously in consequence.

[7] The A/A guns in Ceylon were distributed as follows:—
Colombo—18 heavy (including 4—3-in.), 25 light.
Ratmalana—4 heavy, 12 light.
Trincomalee—20 heavy, 31 light.

[8] These figures are from the latest report available, C.-in-C., Ceylon's War Diary, dated 1st October, 1942. Earlier estimates placed the Japanese losses somewhat higher. (*See* Appendix C.)

Meanwhile the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, with Force "A," had left Addu Atoll at 0015, 5th April, and at the time of the raid was steering 070°, 18 knots, with the intention of reaching a position 250 miles south of Ceylon at dawn, 6th April. Force "B" had just cleared Addu Atoll, and was following about 130 miles astern of the Commander-in-Chief.

6. Loss of H.M. Ships "Dorsetshire" and "Cornwall," 5th April, 1942.

(Plan 4.)

The *Dorsetshire* (Captain Agar, V.C.) and *Cornwall* (Captain Manwaring)—Captain Agar being the Senior Officer—had sailed from Colombo at 2200, 4th April, and shaped course 220°, 23 knots. During the night orders were received from the Commander-in-Chief to join him in Lat. 00° 58′ N., Long. 77° 36′ E. at 1600, 5th April, and at about 0700 course was altered to 185° for this rendezvous. About an hour later the report of strong enemy forces to the eastward of the cruisers at 0648[1] was received in the *Dorsetshire*, and Captain Agar increased speed to 27½ knots (the maximum at which the *Cornwall* was able to proceed) in order to join the Commander-in-Chief as soon as possible.[2]

It was a calm day, with little or no cloud, and a slight haze over the sun; visibility was extreme. At about 1100 a single aircraft was sighted by the *Cornwall* and reported to the *Dorsetshire*. It was a long way astern (estimated about 20 miles) and was lost sight of before it could be identified.[3] Two other aircraft were sighted about 1300—one, some 14 miles ahead, judged from its silhouette to be friendly, and one astern, which closed to within 14 miles and was considered hostile. In view of the proximity of the rendezvous and the risk of the enemy aircraft detecting Force "A," Captain Agar decided to break wireless silence and make a shadowing report. The ship was then in Lat. 2° 12′ N., Long. 77° 47′ E.

At about 1340,[4] 5th April, three aircraft were sighted by the *Dorsetshire*[5] overhead at a high altitude; assuming them to be hostile, she opened fire immediately, but "within a few seconds they dived on the *Cornwall*"—which was about a mile on the port quarter—and released their bombs at a low altitude, the first striking the after hangar and the second scoring a near miss port side forward. Simultaneously, a separate formation of three aircraft attacked the *Dorsetshire*; avoiding action was taken to starboard, but all three bombs hit—one through the quarterdeck, disabling the steering gear, the second through

[1] *See* Section 5. This report (one battleship, 2 cruisers steering 290°) was received at Colombo at 0702, 5th April, and broadcast on station wavelengths at 0703. Subsequent corrections (to two battleships, two cruisers and destroyers, and course 282°, 12½ knots) were also broadcast as soon as received.

[2] The Deputy C.-in-C., and Chief-of-Staff, Eastern Fleet, had discussed the enemy information then available with both C.O.s before sailing, and had pointed out that their duty was to keep clear and join the C.-in-C. Both C.O.s entirely agreed with this appreciation.

[3] The C.-in-C. subsequently regretted that no shadowing report of this aircraft had been made. Had this been done he would have considered breaking wireless silence so as to effect an earlier rendezvous with the two cruisers, and afford fighter cover during the closing stages of the approach.

[4] All records were lost in both ships, and consequently there are naturally discrepancies which cannot quite be reconciled in the actual times. The main sequence of events is, however, clear. The attacks developed shortly after 1340, and by 1359 all was over, and both ships sunk. Captain Agar estimates the *Dorsetshire* sank 7 or 8 minutes after the initial attack, and Captain Manwaring gives 12 to 13 minutes for the *Cornwall*. The account which follows is compiled from reports by Captain Agar, Commander Fair of the *Cornwall*, and Captain Manwaring's subsequent remarks.

[5] No warning of the enemy approach seems to have been received by the *Dorsetshire's* R.D/F. The *Cornwall* was not fitted with R.D/F.

the catapult, disabling both wireless offices, and the third port side amidships, putting out of action all the port A/A armament, except the pom-pom. Attacks by a " succession of formations of three " followed at intervals of a few seconds. Hits were received through the base of the foremost funnel, putting out of action S1–H/A group and " A " boiler room ; on the quarterdeck, disabling " X " turret,[1] and at the base of the after funnel, bringing it down and at the same time blowing up the H.A. magazine. This bomb also put both pom-poms out of action.

Four minutes after the initial attack the ship took a definite list to port ; " all communication between the bridge and other parts of the ship had gone, and looking down from the bridge aft, all that could be seen was flames and smoke extending to the stern." At least four more hits were received (making a total of 10) in addition to several near misses, and 2 minutes later Captain Agar, realising the ship was sinking, ordered all hands on deck. This was followed in half a minute by the order to abandon ship, by which time she was slowly turning on to her beam ends. " Enemy aircraft were still flying low over the ship and using their machine-guns,[2] and it was possible to get a clear picture of them and their occupants." Almost immediately afterwards she capsized and sank stern first. " It was incredible how quickly the ship sank "—to quote Captain Agar—" she just took one plunge by the stern, and as we were thrown into the water, the bows towered up almost vertically alongside us. All around was wreckage of sorts and oil fuel, though not very thick. . . ."

Meanwhile the *Cornwall*, though still afloat, had not fared much better. " For the next 2 minutes after the initial attack,"[3] reported Commander Fair, " bombs fell almost continuously, some scoring direct hits, but the majority were very near misses."[4] Explosions followed each other so quickly that no exact idea could be formed of their sequence, or of the separate effect of each bomb. Altogether eight hits and six near misses were sustained ; only two complete misses were observed.

A near miss port side, abreast the bridge, flooded large sections of the port bilges and dislocated electric power supplies all over the ship. All personnel in the after engine room were killed (it is believed) by a near miss on the starboard side, abreast the hangar, and both boiler rooms were flooded by near misses and had to be evacuated. A bomb on the waterline abreast the hangar, burst in the forward engine room, which rapidly filled with steam and smoke and had to be evacuated, most of the personnel being saved ; hits were also received between the forward and centre funnel, between " X " and " Y " turrets, near the dynamo room, in the sick bay flat and in the recreation space. Many of the bridge personnel were killed or wounded by splinters of a bomb which exploded on the starboard paravane ; in one case at least the bridge was also machine-gunned. An oil bomb which burst on S1 mounting produced a flame which enveloping S1, the starboard pom-pom and fore starboard superstructure, swept right over the air defence position and 8-in. director. Battle dress[5]

[1] The magazine was saved by prompt drenching.

[2] Two officers are reported to have been killed and some others wounded in this way as they were going over the side.

[3] The initial attack, which came from ahead out of the sun, was unobserved till about 10 seconds before the arrival of the first bombs. The rudder was at once put hard-a-starboard ; very shortly afterwards the steering gear was disabled. The ship started to lose way after the first hit, and by 1355 was practically stopped.

[4] Captain Manwaring subsequently expressed the opinion that in spite of the numerous hits received, the actual cause of the sinking of the ship in such a short time was under-water damage received from near misses. " The effect of these near misses was very great, lifting the ship bodily by their force, causing her to whip heavily from end to end, and carrying away all W/T aerials, and nearly shaking the mast down."

[5] Hands had been piped to clean into battle dress at 0800.

and anti-flash gear saved all except the gun's crew of S1, whose clothing caught fire. In less than 5 minutes after the attack started all power had failed, and both boiler rooms and both engine rooms were flooding rapidly. The port gunwhale of the ship was awash, and the starboard outer propeller was breaking surface, the ship being slightly down by the bows. Thick black smoke was issuing from the foremost funnel uptake casings on both sides of the upper deck.

By 1351 the last bombs had been dropped, the *Dorsetshire* had sunk, and in the *Cornwall* endeavours were being made to correct the list to port and to get away a report by wireless.[1] It soon became evident that the ship was sinking, and Captain Manwaring, who continued to direct operations, though wounded in the right shoulder, gave orders to prepare to abandon ship. He then, with the remaining bridge personnel, left the bridge and, making his way aft, saw to the launching of all available floats, etc. At 1355 the final order to abandon ship was given.

While this was being done, the Japanese aircraft, which had ceased attacking—either because it was obvious that the ship was doomed, or more probably because they had expended all their bombs—formed up in sub-flights and flew over the survivors. Twenty-seven dive-bombers and one float plane were counted[2] ; there was no machine-gunning of the men in the water.

The end was not long in coming. Some 4 minutes later the *Cornwall* heeled over to about 70° and went down by the bows, taking her final plunge at an angle of about 30° to the vertical and making singularly little disturbance. Once again the Japanese airmen had attacked and their dive bombing had been as successful as the torpedo and high level bombing they had used against the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*. The attacks were carried out by single-engined two-seater monoplanes,[3] diving steeply at an angle of from 60° to 80° from ahead or fine on the bow. Captain Agar remarked that their tactics were facilitated by the ships being on a southerly course, thus enabling them to combine the advantages of attacking down sun and from ahead—the cruisers' blind spot for A/A defences. The attacks were well pressed home, the height of release being estimated at from 500 to 1,000 ft., and the bombing was remarkably accurate.[4] The bombs were dropped in such a manner as to have one falling at the moment the previous one was exploding. Slightly longer intervals were noticed after every three bombs, which suggested that the attack was organised in sub-flights. The size of the bombs dropped was thought in the *Cornwall* to be between 250 and 500 lb. ; Captain Agar mentioned 1,000 lb. as the probable weight. Some burst on impact and in some the explosion was delayed. The great effect of the near misses which burst under water has already been remarked on.[5] So sudden and severe was the attack that the main H.A.

[1] The main wireless was out of action, but the remote control office, using the emergency set, transmitted an enemy report in plain language on 3835 kc/s, using ship's position at 1330, 5th April. This was made four times, but was not picked up.

[2] Captain Manwaring considered that the number of aircraft concerned in the attacks was " in the neighbourhood of 36, or above." Captain Agar reported " the total number of planes counted was 50, but it is possible that more were used."

[3] This description fits both the Ju. 87 dive-bomber and the Navy 97 two-seater reconnaissance bomber. The latter is considered more probable. (C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.)

[4] Though the height of release was in some cases estimated as 500 ft. or less, this would not be possible if the aircraft was diving steeply. It seems probable that the release was actually at 1,000 ft. or more, the aircraft sinking to 300–500 ft. on the pull out. The *Cornwall* estimated that 90 per cent. of the bombs dropped scored hits or near misses.

[5] It was suggested in the *Cornwall's* report that these were, in fact, a special type of bomb, described as a " depth-charge with a pointed nose and small vanes. . . . After a brief pause there followed a tremendous explosion,which caused great under-water damage, and threw up a big column of water." The C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, remarked that " a new method of attack may be indicated, though it is possible that the bombs were in fact, light case H.E. with a short delay fuze which exploded under water, or on contact with the under-water body of the ship." Taking all the evidence into consideration, the Admiralty considered this the most likely explanation.

armament of both cruisers was put out of action before more than a few rounds could be fired. The short-range weapons continued to be fought with the utmost gallantry right up to the last; the *Cornwall* is credited with having damaged one aircraft and probably destroyed another which was seen to hit the water.

A surprisingly large number from each cruiser survived these devastating attacks. They found themselves in a far from enviable plight—adrift in a shark-infested ocean, 300 miles from land, and with the scantiest of boat accommodation. Of the *Dorsetshire* there remained only two whalers—leaking badly—a skiff, a floatanet, two Carley floats, some Denton rafts and odd bits of wreckage. The wounded were placed in the boats or Denton rafts, and the remainder swam round collecting wreckage and joining it up as rafts round the boats. Captain Agar records that in quite a short time " all survivors from the ship, numbering over 500, formed one single body in the water, and were under perfect discipline and control." A couple of miles off the *Cornwall's* survivors were doing much the same. In their case a whaler, a motor boat (defuelled), two large oiling fenders and six Carley floats formed the rallying point. Help could not be expected to reach them for at least 24 hours, but they were cheered in the late afternoon by the appearance of an Albacore, followed shortly by a Fulmar, which passed them a message to hold on. About sunset an aircraft believed to have been hostile was sighted flying very high overhead. Then the night closed down. All that night and the following day they drifted in an oily calm, the wounded and exhausted in the boats, which were loaded almost gunwale under,[1] and the remainder in the water, holding on to what they could. The spirit, fortitude and discipline of the officers and men of both ships throughout this ordeal, as well as during the action, is described as " beyond all praise."[2] Soon after sunrise, 6th April, the heat became intense, and head coverings were fashioned from pieces cut from battledress. Sharks were numerous, but they seemed content to wait for the corpses which were from time to time committed to the sea, and made no attempt to molest anyone living. Both parties were short of food and drink[3]; what they had was sparingly doled out at intervals. In the late afternoon, 6th April, the appearance of an Albacore put good heart into everyone, and shortly afterwards the masts of a cruiser and two destroyers were sighted over the horizon to the south-west. These proved to be the *Enterprise* (Captain Annesley), *Paladin* and *Panther*, and their 30 hours' ordeal was nearly at an end. " The skill and seamanship displayed by the Commanding Officer of the *Enterprise* and his two destroyers," reports Captain Agar, " can best be described by the bare statement of fact that 1,122 men[4] in the water, for the most part exhausted, and with a large number of wounded, were brought on board within the space of an hour without the loss of a single life."

7. Movements of Eastern Fleet, 5th/9th April, 1942. (Plan 4.)

While the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall* had been making their ill-fated attempt to rejoin him, Admiral Somerville with Force " A " had continued on his course (070°) at 18 knots for the rendezvous. Reports from Colombo of the enemy progress towards Ceylon came in at intervals during the night (*see*

[1] At one time there were 52 men in one of the *Dorsetshire's* whalers, 47 in the other and 20 in the skiff.

[2] C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet.

[3] The *Dorsetshire's* had three barricoes of water, two cases of milk and two cases of biscuits. The *Cornwall's* found that oil and sea water had entered all their barricoes and rendered their water undrinkable. Fortunately, some cases of tinned fruit had been included in the " abandon ship ration," and these proved invaluable.

[4] Nineteen officers and 215 ratings were lost from the *Dorsetshire* and 10 officers and 180 ratings from the *Cornwall*.

Section 5, Note 5). An air A/S patrol was maintained ahead of the Fleet from 0645, 5th April, and four Fulmars from the *Indomitable* searched to a depth of 215 miles to the eastward (*see* Plan 4). They sighted nothing except one enemy seaplane at 0855, bearing 076° 150 miles from Force " A," which suggested that the Japanese were reconnoitring to the south-westward of their main force.

Between 0702 and 1105, 5th April, reports indicated that enemy battleships[1] were " marking time " in a position some 120 miles from Dondra Head, while the carriers recovered their aircraft after the attack on Colombo. This position was 150 miles from that estimated for the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, and their distance was opening, but a mutilated shadowing signal received from Colombo at 1327 was subsequently identified at 1406 as from the *Dorsetshire*.[2] At 1344 an enemy air formation was detected by R.D/F. bearing 030° 84 miles from Force " A." This faded from the screen after 5 minutes. It is now clear that this was the force attacking the 8-in. cruisers.

The Fleet held on to the eastward during the afternoon, 5th April. At 1552, one of Force " A's " reconnaissance aircraft reported wreckage in Lat. 2° 08′ N., Long. 78° 08′ E. A destroyer was detached to investigate, but was recalled an hour later on receipt of another report from the air reconnaissance of an enemy force—five " unknowns "—in Lat. 3° 38′ N., Long. 78° 18′ E. at 1600. No course or speed was given and it was not clear whether this was the force last located at 1004, or a new force not previously reported. At 1700, 5th April, Colombo reported indications of enemy aircraft carriers steering 230°, 24 knots at 1400, from an unknown position. This course would take them in the direction of Addu Atoll, and an air attack on that place seemed quite a possible course of action. In any case, it was necessary for Force " A " to keep clear to the southward, and for Force " B "—then estimated 135 miles astern, in Lat. 0° 12′ N., Long. 75° 15′ E.—also to steer to the southward, so as to be able to close Force " A " for supporting action at daylight the following morning and to keep clear of the enemy carrier force if it was, in fact, bound for Addu Atoll. Admiral Somerville accordingly altered course to 210°, 18 knots, at 1726, and ordered Vice-Admiral Willis and the *Dorsetshire* to steer south. By this time grave anxiety for the two 8-in. cruisers was felt, but no signal that they were actually being attacked had come in, and it was hoped that they had escaped and were maintaining wireless silence.

At 1800, 5th April, Rear-Admiral Boyd reported that reconnaissance aircraft placed the enemy's position at 1710 as 020° 120 miles from Force " A." This was very close to the previously reported 1600 position and fitted in well with the course received from Colombo, but 17 minutes later he followed this up with a further signal, amending the 1600 position, and stating that the enemy force, consisted of two aircraft carriers and three unknown vessels, *steering north-west*. This was the first indication the Commander-in-Chief had received of an enemy course in this direction. He immediately altered course to 315°, in order to keep Force " A " within night striking distance of the enemy, and ordered Force " B " to conform, a rendezvous being arranged in Lat. 3° N., Long. 75° E. at dawn.

At 1930, 5th April, a night search with A.S.V. aircraft was commenced to cover the sector 345° to 030° to a depth of 180 miles, and from 2100, 5th April, to 0600, 6th April, further A.S.V. searches were carried out from 020° to 080° to a depth of 200 miles; no contact with the enemy occurred, but Force " B " was reported bearing 220°, 25 miles from Force " A " at 0400, 6th April, and the junction of the two forces was effected 3 hours later.

[1] 0648, 5th April, in Lat. 3° 55′ N., 80° 40′ E., steering 290°. 0730, 5th April, course 120°. 1004, 5th April, Lat, 4° N., long. 80° 25′ E., steering 282°.

[2] The *Dorsetshire's* position at 1400 was estimated as 037° 90 miles from Force " A."

No information of the enemy's movements had been received since the previous evening, but " nothing had occurred to diminish the possibility of the enemy's being in the vicinity of Addu Atoll, either to attack it by air this morning (6th April) or to wait the return of the Eastern Fleet ". Adhering to his policy of keeping clear of enemy superior forces by day, and attacking them by air at night, the Commander-in-Chief decided to steer to the eastward, in order to gain a position from which to launch an attack during their possible return to the Addu area. This course would also close the scene of the loss of the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, and enable him to rescue their survivors. Accordingly, the Fleet steered 090° till 1115, 6th April, when course was altered to 135° for the position of the wreckage reported the previous evening.

At 1300, 6th April, the *Enterprise*, *Paladin* and *Panther* were detached to search for survivors. Air search was provided to assist, and a fighter escort covered the operation. This was completely successful (*see* Section 6), and they rejoined the Fleet the following day in the Veimandu Channel.

About an hour later a signal was received from the Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, estimating that a strong Japanese force was somewhere between Addu Atoll and Colombo. This decided Admiral Somerville not to approach Addu till after daylight, 7th April. All-round air searches to a depth of 200 miles failed to reveal any enemy and at 1800 course was reversed and the Fleet retired to the north-west.

At 0200, 7th April, course was altered to west. Two and a half hours later, two submarines were located by A.S.V. aircraft to the southward of the track of the Fleet. This led the Commander-in-Chief to suspect the existence of enemy submarine patrols covering the eastern approach to Addu ; he therefore decided to pass to the west of the Maldives through the Veimandu Channel and make an unexpected approach from the westward.

An all-round air search to a depth of 175 miles flown off at 0700, 8th April, proved negative and, at 1100 that forenoon, the Fleet arrived at Addu Atoll. There it remained only long enough to complete with fuel. During the afternoon, 8th April, the Commander-in-Chief held a conference with his Flag and Commanding Officers, at which he discussed the situation and explained his intentions.

The experiences of the last few days had left no doubt in his mind as to the undesirability of further operations in Ceylon waters for the time being, and that morning he sent an appreciation to this effect to the Admiralty. The enemy had complete command of the Bay of Bengal and at his selected moment could obtain local command of the waters south and south-west of Ceylon. The British naval and land-based aircraft available there were quite inadequate to offer sustained opposition. The battlefleet—slow, outgunned, and of short endurance—was only a liability in the Ceylon area under these conditions, and the available carrier-borne air protection would be of little use against repeated attacks on the scale used against the *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*. There was but little security against air or surface attacks at the Ceylon naval bases and none at Addu Atoll. For these reasons the Commander-in-Chief decided to send Force " B " to Kilindini, where it could protect Middle East and Persian Gulf communications, and do some collective training. Force " A " would continue to operate in Indian waters, with the object of deterring the Japanese from attacking Indian Ocean communications with light forces, but for the immediate future would avoid Ceylon.[1]

Vice-Admiral Willis with Force " B," accordingly sailed from Addu Atoll for Kilindini at 0200, 9th April, and the Commander-in-Chief, with Force "A," sailed 4 hours later for Bombay.

[1] Instructions were received from the Admiralty shortly afterwards that Force " A " was not to proceed to Colombo for the present.

8. Attacks on Trade. (Plan 2.)

While these events had been taking place in the Ceylon–Addu area, another Japanese force, believed to consist of one or more capital ships and two or three carriers, besides cruisers and destroyers, had been operating in the Bay of Bengal against merchant shipping. Shipping on the east coast of India was sailing at this time in small unescorted groups, routed as close inshore as practicable. No protection was possible against the Japanese attack, and between 5th and 9th April aircraft accounted for 15 merchant ships, while eight were sunk by surface vessels—a total of over 112,000 gross tons. At the same time, merchant shipping on the west coast of India was attacked by submarines. Ranging from north-west of Bombay to east of Addu Atoll, these attacks commenced on 2nd April, and in the week that followed sunk five merchant ships, totalling some 30,000 tons.[1]

9. Air Attack on Trincomalee. (Plan 2.)

Early on 9th April Trincomalee was subjected to a heavy air raid, launched (it is believed) by the same force which had carried out the attack on Colombo four days previously.

The first warning was received on the afternoon of 8th April, when a Catalina reported three battleships and an aircraft carrier in Lat. 6° 10′ N., Long. 88° 49′ E. (095°, 540 miles from Colombo), steering 330° at 1517.[2] The probability of a dawn air attack on either Trincomalee or Madras was apparent. In view of the success of the evasive tactics practised at Colombo, and since there were but few fighters at Trincomalee (11 Hurricanes), the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, ordered the harbour to be cleared,[3] and that night the following ships sailed to the southward with orders to keep close inshore and to be at least 40 miles from Trincomalee by dawn, 9th April :—the *Hermes* and *Vampire* (in company), the minelayer *Teviot Bank*, R.F.A. *Pearleaf*, s.s. *British Sergeant*, loaded armament store issuing ships and the corvette *Hollyhock* escorting R.F.A. *Athelstane*.

No further report of the enemy was received during the night, but at 0520, 9th April, aircraft were located 15 to 30 miles away, bearing between 060° and 100° by R.D/F. at Elizabeth Point (Trincomalee) ; no attack, however, developed. At 0716, 9th April, a Catalina which had left a couple of hours before to search to the eastward, reported large enemy forces steering 330°.[4]

[1] *See* Appendix E (1).

[2] After shadowing for about an hour the Catalina was attacked by enemy fighters, and lost contact while taking avoiding action in cloud.

[3] The C.-in-C., East Indies, subsequently stated :—" When making my decision to sail the *Hermes* and all other shipping from Trincomalee rather than leave them in harbour under the umbrella of the fighters, I had in mind :—

(*a*) That the experience of the raid on Colombo the previous Sunday had indicated that shipping would be the primary target.

(*b*) Our fighters were not in sufficient force to provide adequate protection for the shipping in harbour.

(*c*) H.M.S. *Hermes* in particular would provide a most attractive target at anchor.

(*d*) Evasive tactics had proved most successful at Colombo, where 48 ships had been dispersed previous to the attack. The enemy had made no attempt to locate them.

Dispersal to the southward was chosen as on the previous occasion of air attack on Ceylon ships had been sent to the northward. A further argument against dispersal to the northward was that the accumulation of 22 merchant vessels in Palk Straits which might already have been spotted by enemy reconnaissance machines might well attract enemy bombers in that direction."

[4] The Catalina had been ordered to leave at 0500, 9th April, and carry out a cross-over search between Lats. 6° 40′ N. and 9° 40′ N. on the meridian 84° 30′ E. She was probably shot down while making the enemy report, as the signal faded without giving a position or time of origin.

Ten minutes before this, however, R.D/F.[1] had picked up aircraft 91 miles off, approaching Trincomalee on the bearing 078° and at 0725 the harbour, docks and China Bay aerodrome were attacked by a force of about 54 bombers escorted by about 40 fighters. Both high level and dive bombing attacks were carried out; the bombing was accurate and, as at Colombo, confined to military objectives. No bombs were dropped in Trincomalee town itself. Considerable damage was done to the aerodrome, the south hangar and several stores being completely demolished. There were also serious losses of F.A.A. aircraft in various stages of erection and repair, seven Swordfish, four Fulmars and two Albatross being destroyed. The dockyard received major damage from several direct hits; several workshops and all godowns were wrecked, power and water mains cut, and cranes put out of action. The enemy seem to have deliberately refrained from attacking the oil installation, but one tank was set on fire by an enemy aircraft which crashed into it, after being shot down by A/A fire. In the harbour the *Erebus* was slightly damaged by a near miss which caused 31 casualties (nine fatal), and the s.s. *Sagaing* was hit, set on fire and beached. The casualties were remarkably light, amounting to 20 killed and 33 wounded in all three Services, and 38 civilians killed.

Thanks to the R.D/F. warning, all airworthy British aircraft were ready, and a total of 16 Hurricane Is and one Hurricane II from No. 261 Squadron, and 6 Fulmars from No. 273 Squadron took the air. Though heavily outnumbered they inflicted substantial losses on the enemy, estimated at 15 certain, 17 probable and 5 damaged[2]; 8 Hurricanes and 1 Fulmar were lost. The A/A defences also did well, shooting down 9 and damaging 3 aircraft. At 0840, 9th April, a striking force of nine Blenheims of No. 11 Squadron was despatched to attack the Japanese carriers. The enemy force, consisting of three battleships, four or five carriers and four or five cruisers, screened by destroyers, was sighted at 1025; one of the carriers was attacked from 11,000 ft., three near misses being observed. The Blenheims met with stiff opposition from enemy fighters during their attack, and were also attacked on their return passage. They shot down four enemy aircraft, but lost five of their number, and the four which got back were all damaged.

While the raid on Trincomalee was in progress, two enemy reconnaissance planes appeared over Colombo. They were engaged by A/A guns and left without dropping bombs. This had a most unfortunate sequel, as their return course took them within sight of the *Hermes* and shipping from Trincomalee off the East coast of Ceylon.

10. Loss of H.M. Ships "Hermes," "Vampire" and "Hollyhock." (Plan 2.)

Meanwhile the *Hermes*[3] (Captain Onslow) and *Vampire* (Commander Moran, R.A.N.) had sailed from Trincomalee at 0100, 9th April, and had proceeded to the southward in accordance with their orders (*see* Section 9). At the time of the air attack on Trincomalee (0725, 9th April) they were some 65 miles from the harbour entrance, and about 5 miles from the east coast of Ceylon. At 0900 course was set to the northward, in order to return to Trincomalee by 1600 that afternoon. The weather was fine, the sea smooth and the visibility good.

[1] The C.-in-C., Ceylon, remarks, "The supreme advantage of effective R.D/F. warning was well seen in the contrast between the Colombo and the Trincomalee attacks. In the latter case we had only half the number of fighters in the air, but the early warning enabled them to inflict considerable losses, though heavily outnumbered. In fact, the Japanese published reports, so far as they go, confirm that their losses were higher at Trincomalee than at Colombo."

[2] *See* Appendix C.

[3] The *Hermes* aircraft had been disembarked, and were retained on shore.

Some 7 miles to the E.S.E. the *Athelstane* with the *Hollyhock* (Lieut.-Commander Davies) zigzagging ahead was in sight, making to the southward, while to the northward, off Elephant Point (Lat. 8° N., Long. 81° 33′ E.), was the *British Sergeant*, which altered course for Trincomalee at about the same time as did the *Hermes*.

At 0858, 9th April, a Japanese aircraft report was intercepted at Colombo; this was interpreted by 0930 and proved to be a sighting report of the *Hermes*. The Flag Officer-in-Charge, Trincomalee, and the *Hermes* were both informed of this report, and that fighters were being sent from Ratmalana to her assistance; and the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, ordered her to proceed to Trincomalee with the utmost despatch.[1] Shortly afterwards, orders were sent to China Bay to send such fighter support to her as the situation allowed, and to Ratmalana to send seven Fulmars to patrol over her, and a further seven, one hour later, to relieve them. But it was too late. No fighters reached the *Hermes*, owing to failure of communications,[2] and for the second time that week surface craft had to rely on their A/A armament to oppose an overwhelming dive-bombing attack, with the inevitable result.

On receipt of the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies', orders, the *Hermes* increased to full speed (24 knots) and at 1025, 9th April, was abreast of Batticoala when Japanese R/T was heard near at hand. Ten minutes later aircraft were sighted on the starboard quarter coming out of the sun at about 10,000 ft. They attacked immediately afterwards, diving at an angle of about 65° on the carrier which opened fire with every gun that would bear as they came into range.

"The attack was carried out perfectly, relentlessly and quite fearlessly, and was exactly like a highly organised deck display. The aircraft peeled off in threes, diving straight down on the ship out of the sun on the starboard side. Hits were scored at once, aft, on the port side, in the region of S.1 gun and on the forward lift.[3]" During the next 10 minutes attacks developed from all directions and bombs fell almost continuously. Soon both boiler rooms had been put out of action[4] and the foremost lift had been blown completely out and was lying upside down on the deck. By 1050 all way was off the ship and she was listing heavily to port, the flight deck being awash; smoke was pouring out of the hangar, and the starboard side, by S.2 gun. Though bombs were still falling, it was hoped that the damage control party would be able to get her upright, but suddenly the heel increased rapidly and Captain Onslow gave the order to abandon ship. The end came very quickly, and at 1055, 9th April—

[1] Owing to the breakdown of all communication with Trincomalee, the C.-in-C., East Indies, at this time was unaware of the full weight of the attack, and thought that only one carrier was included in the enemy force. (Catalina's report, 1517, 8th April; *see* Section 9.) As the *Hermes* was about 180 miles from the estimated position of the enemy, it was hoped she would have time to reach the "umbrella" at Trincomalee, before the Japanese aircraft could refuel, bomb up and return to attack her. Actually four or five carriers were operating, and subsequently the C.-in-C. was of the opinion that the enemy had a complete striking force ready in reserve.

[2] Damage to telephone circuits in Trincomalee prevented the message from getting through to China Bay (60 miles from the *Hermes*) till 1048, when six Hurricanes took the air. The message to Ratmalana (130 miles from the *Hermes*) was sent by despatch rider and was apparently not received till about 1030; the Fulmars were airborne by 1046 and did not cross the coast till 1200, but the C.-in-C., East Indies, was doubtful whether they could have arrived in time in any case. (*See* Appendix F.)

[3] Extract from statement of Captain A. J. S. Crockett, R.M. 5·5-in. Rate Officer stationed in *Hermes'* top. Captain Crockett, who was well placed for accurate observation, states that the machines were of two types—some twin-engined and some of a Junkers 88 type. The former may have carried two bombs, the latter one, but reports of officer survivors differ as to the number of bombs carried by each aircraft. Statements as to the size of the bombs are very conflicting; it is considered they were probably about 250 lbs.

[4] All the boiler room personnel except two escaped.

20 minutes after first sighting the enemy—the *Hermes* took her final plunge. "So quickly did she, in fact, go," records the Navigating Officer[1], "that when I came to leave the ship I merely stepped off from the chart house level . . . into the water. Even at this list No. 1 4-in. gun was still firing."

As soon as the *Hermes* had disappeared, the enemy turned their attention to the *Vampire* and she was attacked by 15 or 20 bombers. Ten minutes sufficed to finish her. The first three bombs—near misses—put out of action "A" and "B" guns and the starboard Lewis guns; hits then followed in rapid succession and the order was given to abandon ship. While this was being done, a bomb struck the foremost end of the torpedo tubes; the warheads did not explode, but the ship broke in half, the foremost end sinking immediately. The enemy ceased bombing and were making off when the after magazine exploded and the stern sank at 1105. Two minutes later there was a heavy under-water explosion, presumably the depth-charges. During this brief action one enemy dive-bomber was shot down for certain, and probably another; hits were observed on other aircraft.

The attack had been witnessed by the hospital ship *Vita*, which was on passage from Trincomalee to Colombo. She closed the scene of the action and picked up over 600 survivors. Others were rescued by local craft or swam to the shore. Neither Captain Onslow nor Commander Moran survived their ships.[2]

While the attacks on the *Hermes* and *Vampire* were still in progress, the *British Sergeant* (Master, Captain H. Faulkner)—some 12 miles to the north-westward—was attacked by six dive-bombers. She received four direct hits and two near misses in about 90 seconds, and was left in a sinking condition.[3] According to observers on shore, her A/A fire accounted for one (possibly two) of the attacking aircraft. Her casualties were remarkably light, only one man being slightly injured, and the entire crew reached the shore safely in the four surviving boats.

About an hour after these attacks (1203, 9th April) the *Hollyhock*, which with the *Athelstane* (Master, Captain Moore) had continued to the southward, sighted nine aircraft approaching from ahead. They were then in Lat. 7° 21′ N., Long. 81° 57′ E., about 30 miles to the southward of the position in which the *Hermes* had sunk. Five of the aircraft attacked the *Athelstane* at 1205, scoring several hits; she turned sharply to port and sank almost immediately. The remaining four aircraft then attacked the *Hollyhock* in pairs. The first attacks came from ahead, bombs falling at 1208 and 1209; one—a near miss—put No. 2 boiler out of action, the other exploding 30 or 40 yards to starboard. The *Hollyhock* then started to close the *Athelstane* to rescue survivors, but at 1217 the second pair attacked from the port beam. Both bombs hit; the after part of the ship "disintegrated, and she sank in within 30 to 45 seconds." Fire was kept up by the 4-in. gun—which incidentally had been damaged by the first bomb—and the pom-pom to the last[4]. There were only 16 survivors,

[1] Lieut.-Commander L. K. A. Block, senior surviving Executive Officer, H.M.S. *Hermes*. Lieut.-Commander Block estimated that the ship "was hit by at least 40 bombs, the remainder being very near misses, all of which shook the ship considerably." About 50 aircraft are believed to have attacked.

[2] Nineteen officers, 288 ratings of the *Hermes* were lost; one officer, seven ratings of the *Vampire*.

[3] She remained afloat till 1300, 9th April, when she sank in Lat. 8° 01′ N., Long. 81° 40′ E., off Elephant Point.

[4] The *Hollyhock* was not fully equipped with close-range weapons. Two twin Lewis guns had been transferred to the *Aster* and were to have been replaced by two Oerlikons during her last boiler cleaning at Colombo; but in fact only their pedestals had been put on board.

who were picked up by the *Athelstane*'s boat; the Commanding Officer, two officers and 50 ratings lost their lives. As the *Athelstane* sank, eight Fulmars which had been sent from Ratmalana to patrol over the *Hermes*[1] appeared on the scene. These engaged various enemy aircraft, shooting down at least three, and losing two of their number.

These actions marked the close of the Japanese offensive in Indian waters.[2] That afternoon (9th April) three carriers and nine large vessels, accompanied by destroyers, were sighted in Lat. 8° 25′ N., Long. 84° 15′ E., 170 miles east of Trincomalee, steering 180°, 25 knots; this was the last seen of them in the waters round Ceylon.

11. Conclusion

The immediate consequence of the operations was curious; both fleets withdrew from the waters which had been the scene of so much activity—the British to East Africa and the Japanese east of the straits of Malacca. Nor, apart from periodical cruises by Force "A" and occasional isolated attacks by Japanese submarines on merchant ships, has there been, up to April, 1943, any recurrence of activity. The threat of the renascent power of the United States in the Pacific, or other considerations, caused the Japanese to concentrate their efforts on the Pacific Islands, and with the growing British air power, the threat to Ceylon and India gradually receded.

Summing up, the Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, remarked that the evidence goes to show that the object of the Japanese in these operations was purely a raid on the harbours and aerodromes of Ceylon, combined with attacks on shipping in that area. The composition of the enemy force is uncertain, but it seems likely that the force operating south of Ceylon on 5th April consisted of three battleships, four aircraft carriers (probably the *Zuikaku*, *Shokaku*, *Ryujo* and *Soryu*) with at least two cruisers and six destroyers.

On 7th or 8th April this force was joined by the carrier *Akagi*, which had been operating against shipping in the Bay of Bengal on 6th April, and possibly other cruisers and destroyers.

In the course of the operations, the British lost two large cruisers, a small aircraft carrier, two destroyers, a corvette and many merchant ships. In aircraft, too, our losses were considerable and especially serious in the absence of reserves. After the attacks, the air force in Ceylon was reduced for a time to 21 Hurricanes, 3 Blenheims and 16 Swordfish (including 12 landed from the *Hermes*).

On the other side of the picture, it is certain that the enemy losses in aircraft[3] were a high proportion of their strength, perhaps as high as 30 per cent.[4] There is no evidence, however, that the enemy regarded this loss as excessive, and their experience on this occasion did not deter them from staging a similar attack on Midway Island two months later.

"As a Naval operation, the Japanese raid must be held to have secured a considerable strategical success. It revealed the weakness of the Eastern Fleet, and induced the latter to withdraw from the Ceylon area, and it did this without

[1] The Fulmars mistook the sinking *Athelstane* for the *Hermes* (which had been sunk an hour previously) and reported accordingly.

[2] The remaining ships which had been dispersed from Trincomalee, including the *Teviot Bank*, *Pearleaf* and loaded armament store issue ships were unmolested and in due course returned to harbour.

[3] *See* Appendix C.

[4] The C.-in-C, Ceylon, remarks:—"We were fortunate in that the defence preparations had just (but only just) reached a standard at which it was possible to inflict heavy loss. Even a week or two earlier it might have been a different story. . . ."

the necessity of actually engaging that fleet in battle. Although the Japanese did not follow this up by further attacks on Ceylon, it enabled them to disregard the Eastern Fleet for the time being. The information they gained appears to have convinced them that the Ceylon area itself was not likely to be sufficiently fruitful to warrant attacks on shipping there, and these were discontinued. It would have been a very different story if information of their approach had not allowed us to disperse shipping.[1]"

[1] C.-in-C., Ceylon.

APPENDIX A

H.M. SHIPS EMPLOYED IN OPERATIONS OFF CEYLON, 29th MARCH to 10th APRIL, 1942.

FLEET FLAGSHIP

Warspite (8—15-in. guns)	..	Flag, C.-in-C., E.F., Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O. Captain F. E. P. Hutton.

3rd BATTLE SQUADRON

Resolution (8—15-in. guns)	..	Flag, V.A. 2nd in Command, E.F., Act. Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis, C.B., D.S.O. Captain A. R. Halfhide, C.B.E., A.D.C.
Ramillies (8—15-in. guns)	..	Captain D. N. C. Tufnell, D.S.C.
Royal Sovereign (8—15-in. guns)		Captain R. H. Portal, D.S.C.
Revenge (8—15-in. guns)	..	Captain L. V. Morgan, C.B.E., M.V.O., D.S.O.

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Indomitable (16—4·5-in. guns)	..	Flag, R.A.(A), E.F., Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C. Captain T. H. Troubridge.
Formidable (16—4·5-in. guns)	..	Captain A. W. La T. Bisset, A.D.C.
[1] *Hermes* (6—5·5-in. guns)	..	Captain R. F. J. Onslow, M.V.O., D.S.C.

4th CRUISER SQUADRON

[1] *Dorsetshire* (8—8-in. guns)	..	Captain A. W. S. Agar, V.C., D.S.O.
[1] *Cornwall* (8—8-in. guns)	..	Captain P. C. W. Manwaring.
Enterprise (7—6-in. guns)	..	Captain J. C. [illegible] Annesley, D.S.O.
Emerald (7—6-in. guns)	..	Captain F. C. Flynn.

5th CRUISER SQUADRON

Dragon (6—6-in. guns)	..	Captain R. S. Shaw.
Caledon (5—6-in. guns)	..	Act. Captain H. J. Haynes, D.S.O., D.S.C.

2nd DESTROYER FLOTILLA

Griffin (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Captain H. St. L. Nicholson, D.S.O.
Hotspur (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Lieutenant P. M. Whatley.
Foxhound (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Commander G. H. Peters, D.S.C.
Fortune (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Lieut.-Commander R. D. H. S. Pankhurst.
Decoy (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Lieut.-Commander G. I. M. Balfour.
Arrow (4—4·7-in. guns)	..	Commander A. M. McKillop.

7th DESTROYER FLOTILLA

(A) *Napier* (6—4·7-in. guns)	..	Captain S. H. T. Arliss, D.S.O.
(A) *Nestor* (6—4·7-in. guns)	..	Commander A. S. Rosenthal, D.S.O., R.A.N.
(A) *Norman* (6—4·7-in. guns)	..	Commander H. M. Burrell, R.A.N.
[1] (A) *Vampire* (4—4-in. guns)	..	Commander W. T. A. Moran, R.A.N.

12th DESTROYER FLOTILLA

Paladin (4—4-in. H.A. guns)	..	Commander A. F. Pugsley.
Panther (4—4-in. H.A. guns)	..	Lieut.-Commander Viscount Jocelyn.

9th DESTROYER FLOTILLA

Scout (3—4-in. guns)	..	Lieut.-Commander H. Lambton.
[1] *Tenedos* (3—4-in. guns)	..	Lieut.-Commander R. Dyer.

[1] Sunk by Japanese air attack.
(A) Royal Australian Navy.

APPENDIX A—*contd.*

SLOOPS

Falmouth	Commander U. H. R. James, R.N.
(I) *Hindustan*	Commander I. B. W. Heanly, R.I.N.
(I) *Indus*	Commander J. E. N. Coope, R.I.N.
(I) *Jumna*	Commander W. R. Shewring, R.I.N.
Shoreham	Commander R. E. Tunbridge, R.N.R.
(I) *Sutlej*	Captain P. A. Mare, R.I.N.
(I) *Clive*	Lieut.-Commander R. R. Caws, retd.
(I) *Cornwallis*	Lieutenant W. T. Cullion, R.I.N.R.
(I) *Lawrence*	Lieutenant C. F. Smith, R.I.N.V.R.

CORVETTES

Aster	Lieutenant W. L. Smith, R.N.R.
[1] *Hollyhock*	Lieut.-Commander T. E. Davies, R.N.R.
Marguerite	Lieut.-Commander A. N. Blundell, R.N.R.
Tulip	Lieut.-Commander A. Wilkinson, R.N.R.
Verbena	Lieut.-Commander D. A. Rayner, D.S.C., R.N.V.R.

SUBMARINES

Truant	Lieut.-Commander H. A. V. Haggard, D.S.O., D.S.C.
Trusty	Lieut.-Commander W. D. A. King, D.S.O., D.S.C.

APPENDIX A (1)

SHIPS OF THE ROYAL NETHERLANDS NAVY OPERATING UNDER COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, EASTERN FLEET.

CRUISER

Sumatra (10—5·9-in. guns).

A/A SHIP

Heemskerck (10—4-in. H.A. guns).

DESTROYER

Isaac Sweers (6—4-in. H.A. guns).

SUBMARINES

*K.*14.
*K.*15.
*O.*19.

FAST MINELAYER

W. Van der Zaan.

APPENDIX A (2)

ORGANISATION OF EASTERN FLEET IN FORCES.

Force " A," C.-in-C., E.F.	*Warspite* (Flag), *Indomitable* (Flag, R.A.(A)), *Formidable*, *Dorsetshire*[2], *Cornwall*[2], *Enterprise*, *Emerald*, *Napier*, *Nestor*, *Paladin*, *Panther*, *Hotspur*, *Foxhound*.
Force " B," V.A., 2nd in Command	*Resolution* (Flag), *Ramillies*, *Royal Sovereign*, *Revenge*, *Hermes*[3], *Heemskerck*, *Caledon*, *Dragon*, *Griffin*, *Decoy*[4], *Norman*, *Fortune*, *Arrow*, *Scout*, *Vampire*[3], *Isaac Sweers*.

[1] Sunk by Japanese air attack.
(I) Royal Indian Navy.
[2] Detached 3rd April; sunk 5th April, 1942.
[3] Detached 3rd April; sunk 9th April, 1942.
[4] Detached 1st April.

APPENDIX B

AIR STRENGTH IN CEYLON, 31st MARCH, 1942.

The Royal Air Force comprised three fighter squadrons, Nos. 30, 258 and 261, having between them an average of some 50 Hurricanes, Mark I and Mark II, serviceable; two squadrons were at Colombo and one at China Bay. There were also some Fulmars at China Bay, manned by No. 273 Squadron.

The striking force consisted of No. 11 (Bomber) Squadron, with a strength of 14 Blenheims, and a composite squadron, equipped with Swordfish and Albacore T.S.R. aircraft.

The F.A.A. had on shore two fighter squadrons, Nos. 803 and 806, of Fulmars, and one T.S.R. Squadron, No. 788.

For extended reconnaissance, six Catalinas (plus one in reserve) were available. No balloon barrage was available.

The Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, remarks:—" The air striking force was thus very weak, the Blenheims having had no experience in attacking ships, and the torpedo bomber aircraft being of very poor performance, and in fact unsuitable for attack by day, or against fighter opposition."

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF JAPANESE AIRCRAFT CASUALTIES[1] CLAIMED IN CEYLON OPERATIONS, 5th APRIL to 9th APRIL, 1942.

Note.—"Some overlapping of claims is probable, but there is no doubt that the enemy losses were substantial."—C.-in-C., Ceylon, 1st October, 1942.

Date and Claimant.	Destroyed.	Probably Destroyed.	Damaged.
5th April, Colombo Raid			
By Fighters			
30 Squadron	14	6	5
258 Squadron	4	1	4
803 and 806 Squadron	1	—	—
By A/A Guns			
At Colombo	5	—	Several.
Cornwall	—	1	1
TOTAL	24	8	10 plus.
9th April, Trincomalee			
By Fighters			
261 Squadron	14	14	3
273 Squadron	1	3	2
806 Squadron	3	—	—
By Bombers			
11 Squadron	4	—	—
By A/A Guns			
At Trincomalee	9	—	3
Hermes and *Vampire*	1	1	Several.
TOTAL	32	18	8 plus.
GRAND TOTAL	56	26	18 plus.

[1] The Japanese claimed to have shot down 120 British aircraft in these operations and only to have lost 17. The C.-in-C., Ceylon, suggests that as the former figure exaggerated our losses by about 300 per cent., perhaps the latter should be multiplied by three to give their own real losses.

APPENDIX D

CASUALTIES TO EASTERN FLEET, 5th APRIL to 9th APRIL, 1942.

Date.	Ship.	Position.	Missing, presumed killed.		Remarks.
			Officers.	Ratings.	
5th April	*Tenedos*	At Colombo	3	30	Sunk (bombs).
5th April	*Lucia*	At Colombo	—	2	Damaged (bombs).
5th April	*Dorsetshire*	Approx. Lat. 2° N., Long. 77° 45′ E.	19	215	Sunk (bombs).
5th April	*Cornwall*		10	180	
9th April	*Hermes*	East Coast, Ceylon, Lat. 7° 50′ N., Long. 81° 50′ E.	19[1]	288	Sunk (bombs).
9th April	*Vampire*		1[1]	7	
9th April	*Hollyhock*	East Coast, Ceylon, Lat. 7° 21′ N., Long. 81° 57′ E.	3[1]	50	Sunk (bombs).
9th April	*Erebus*	At Trincomalee	—	9	Slight damage (near miss).

[1] Including Commanding Officer.

APPENDIX E

MERCHANT SHIPPING CASUALTIES, BAY OF BENGAL, 5th APRIL to 9th APRIL, 1942.

Name.	Nationality.	Gross Tonnage.	Remarks.
Harpassa	British	5,082	Sunk by aircraft.
Gandara	British	5,281	
Point Clear	Greek	4,839	
Ganges	British	6,246	
Dardanus	British	7,726	
Silksworth	British	4,921	Attacked by aircraft; abandoned.
Bienville	U.S.A.	5,941	Sunk by aircraft.
Sinkiang	British	2,646	
Malda	British	9,066	
Van der Capellen	Dutch	2,073	
Anglo Canadian	British	5,268	
Selma City	U.S.A.	5,686	
Dagfred	Norwegian	4,434	
Athelstane	British	5,571	
British Sergeant	British	5,868	
Hermod	Norwegian	5,193	Sunk by surface craft.
Batavia	Dutch	1,279	
Exmoor	U.S.A.	4,999	
Autolychus	British	7,621	
Banjoewangi	Dutch	1,279	
Taksang	British	3,471	
Elsa	Norwegian	5,381	
Shinkuang	British	2,441	

APPENDIX E (1)

MERCHANT SHIPPING CASUALTIES, WEST COAST OF INDIA, 2nd APRIL to 9th APRIL, 1942.

Name.	Nationality.	Gross Tonnage.	Remarks.
Glenshiel	British	9,415	Sunk by submarines.
Clanross	British	5,897	
Bahadur	British	5,424	
Washingtonian	U.S.A.	6,617	
Fultala	British	5,051	
Elmdale	British	4,872	Damaged by submarine.

APPENDIX F

FIGHTER PROTECTION FOR H.M.S. "HERMES." SEQUENCE OF EVENTS, 9th APRIL, 1942.

0730	Trincomalee and China Bay attacked.
0735 (approx.)	Air raid warning received by *Hermes*.
0858	Japanese reconnaissance aircraft report of *Hermes* intercepted. (C.-in-C., E.I.)
0930	Above signal interpreted.
0944	*Hermes* informed of sighting by Japanese aircraft, and that "aircraft are being sent from Ratmalana now."
0953	*Hermes* ordered to proceed with utmost despatch to Trincomalee.
0955	Emergency R.A.F. message to China Bay to "render such fighter support as situation will permit." Signal delayed by damage to telephone wires; time of receipt unknown. This delay was fatal, as Hurricanes had only 60 miles to fly to get to *Hermes*' position.
1005	Seven Fulmars at Ratmalana ordered to patrol over *Hermes* immediately; a further seven to leave one hour later. This R.A.F. message was sent by despatch rider, and was apparently not received till about 1030.
1006	*Hermes* informed fighter aircraft being despatched from Trincomalee (*i.e.*, Hurricanes at China Bay).
1045 to 1100	*Hermes* and *Vampire* attacked and sunk.
1046	Eight Fulmars airborne from Ratmalana (action taken on signal 1005 above, *i.e.*, 40 minutes after time of origin).
1053	Six R.A.F. Hurricanes airborne from China Bay (action taken on signal 0955 above, *i.e.*, 58 minutes after time of origin).
1106	Hurricanes recalled owing to air raid warning at Trincomalee.
1200	Eight Fulmars from Ratmalana crossed coast south of Batticoala, and engaged Japanese aircraft bombing two ships.
1205	R.F.A. *Athelstane* sunk.
1207 to 1218	*Hollyhock* attacked and sunk.

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Crockett, Captain A. J. S., Royal Marines, H.M.S. *Hermes*, remarks on Japanese air attack, 10.

Damage, at Colombo, 5; at Trincomalee, 9.

Danckwerts, Rear-Admiral V. H., C.M.G., Chief of Staff, Eastern Fleet, 1 (note), 6 (note).

Davies, Lieut.-Commander T. E., R.N.R., C.O. H.M.S. *Hollyhock*, killed in air attack, 10, Appendix A.

Decoy, H.M.S., breaks down with Force "B," 4 (note); at Colombo during air raid, 5.

Dorsetshire, H.M.S. (Captain A. W. S. Agar, V.C., D.S.O., R.N.) refitting, 2; joins Force "A" and detached to Colombo, 4; ordered to leave Colombo, 5; bombed and sunk, 6, Appendices A, A (2) and D.

Eastern Fleet, strength 1, disposition 2, organisation in forces, 3, Appendix A(2); untrained, 4 (note); operations, 31st March–4th April, 4; arrives at Addu Atoll, 4; during Colombo air raid, 5; operations, 5th–8th April, 7; withdrawal from Ceylon–Addu area, 7, 11.

Enterprise, H.M.S. (Captain J. C. Annesley, , D.S.O., R.N.), 2, 3; Force "A," 4; rescues survivors of *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, 6, 7.

INDEX—*contd.*

F.A.A. in Ceylon, Appendix B (*see* Air Forces).

Fortune, H.M.S. (Lieut.-Commander R. D. H. S. Pankhurst, R.N.), rescues survivors from S.S. *Glenshiel*, 4.

Hector, H.M.A.M.C., bombed and burnt out, 5.

Hermes, H.M.S. (Captain R. F. J. Onslow, M.V.O., D.S.C., R.N.), 2; Force "B," and detached to Trincomalee, 4, 5; ordered to leave Trincomalee, 9 (and note); fighter support fails to arrive, 10; bombed and sunk, 10, Appendices A, A(2), D and F.

Hollyhock, H.M.S. (Lieut.-Commander T. E. Davies, R.N.R.), 5; leaves Trincomalee, 9; bombed and sunk with heavy casualties, 10; short of close-range weapons, 10 (note).

Japanese, success to end of March, 1; intend air attack on Ceylon, 3; naval forces, reported south of Ceylon, 4, 5, 6; between Ceylon and Addu, 7; S.E. and east of Ceylon, 9, 10; employed on operations, 11; operations against merchant shipping, 8; air attacks on Colombo, 5; *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, 6; merchant shipping, 8, 10; Trincomalee, 9; *Hermes*, *Vampire*, *Hollyhock*, 10; air tactics, 6, 10; air casualties, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, Appendix C; submarines, patrol, 4; reported near Eastern Fleet, 7; attacks on trade, 8.

Layton, Admiral Sir Geoffrey, K.C.B., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Ceylon, 1 (note); estimates Japanese forces between Colombo and Addu, 7; remarks on R.D.F., 9 (note); and on Japanese operations, 11.

Lucia, H.M.S. (Commander C. R. de B. L. Townsend), submarine depôt ship, Colombo, damaged in air attack, 5.

Manwaring, Captain P. C., R.N., C.O. H.M.S. *Cornwall*, wounded in air attacks, and remarks on near misses, 6 (and note), Appendix A.

Moran, Commander W. T. A., R.A.N., C.O. H.M.A.S. *Vampire*, killed in air attack, 10, Appendix A.

Onslow, Captain R. F. J., M.V.O., D.S.C., R.N., C.O. H.M.S. *Hermes*, killed in air attack, 10; Appendix A.

Paladin, H.M.S. (Commander A. F. Pugsley, R.N.),, Force "A," 4; rescues survivors of *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, 6, 7, Appendices A, A(2).

Panther, H.M.S. (Lieut.-Commander Viscount Jocelyn, R.N.), Force "A," 4; rescues survivors of *Dorsetshire* and *Cornwall*, 6, 7, Appendices A and A(2).

R.D.F., not working at Colombo, 5; in *Dorsetshire*, 6, 7; at Trincomalee, 9 (and note).

Ratmalana, airport, Colombo, attacked by enemy aircraft, 5; ordered to send fighters to *Hermes*, 9th April, 10, Appendix F.

"R" Class battleships, shortage of water, 4; shortcomings, 7.

R.A.F. in Ceylon, Appendix B (*see* Air Forces).

Royal Netherlands Navy, units with Eastern Fleet, 2 (and note), Appendix A(1).

Somerville, Admiral Sir James F., K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, arrives Colombo, 1; Japanese air attack impending, appreciation and plan, 3; leaves Colombo 30th March, appreciation noon 2nd April, arrives Addu and receives enemy report, 4th April, appreciation, 4; leaves Addu 5th April, 5; appreciation and plan, 6th April, 7; returns to Addu, 8th April, appreciation and policy, 7.

Strategical, situation, end of March, 1942, 1; effect of Japanese operations, 5th-9th April, 11.

Submarines (*see* Japanese).

Tenedos, H.M.S. (Lieut.-Commander R. Dyer, R.N.), bombed and sunk at Colombo, 5.

Teviot Bank, H.M.S. (Commander R. D. King-Harman, D.S.O., D.S.C.), minelayer, 5; leaves Trincomalee, 9, 10.

Trade, Japanese attack on, 1, 8, Appendix E.

Trincomalee, 2; dispersal of shipping, 5, 9 (and note); air attack, 9; A/A defences, 5 (note).

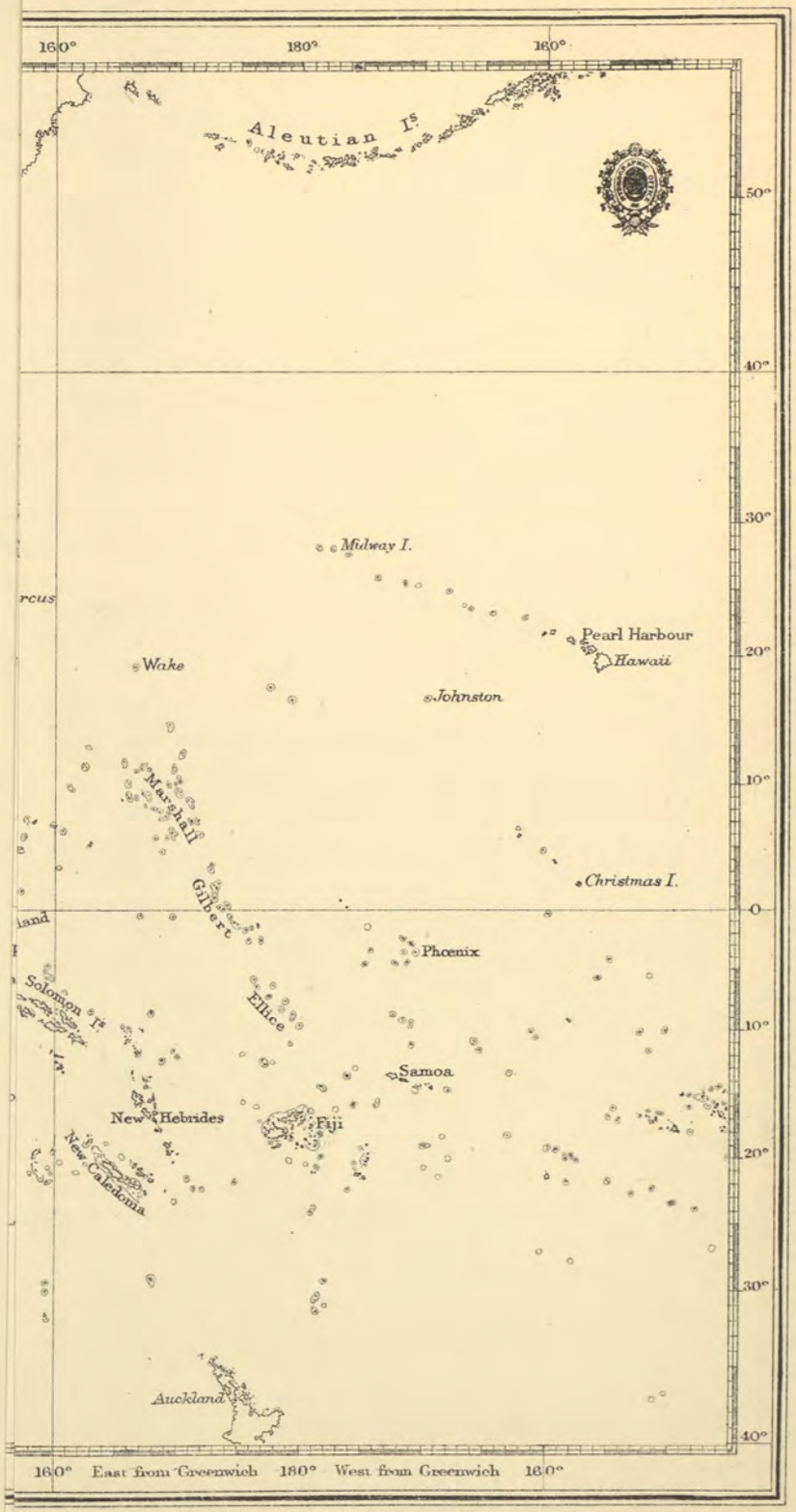
Vampire, H.M.A.S. (Commander W. T. A. Moran, R.A.N.), 2; with *Hermes*, 4, 5, 9; bombed and sunk, 10, Appendices A, A(2) and D.

Warspite, H.M.S. (Captain F. E. P. Hutton), arrives at Trincomalee, 2; hoists flag of C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet, 3; Force "A," 3, Appendices A, A(2).

Willis, Vice-Admiral A. U., C.B., D.S.O., V.A. 3rd B.S. and 2nd-in-Command, E.F., 2; remarks on Fleet training, 4 (note), 7.

Zone Time, 3 (note).

PLAN I


160°
180°
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Hawaii
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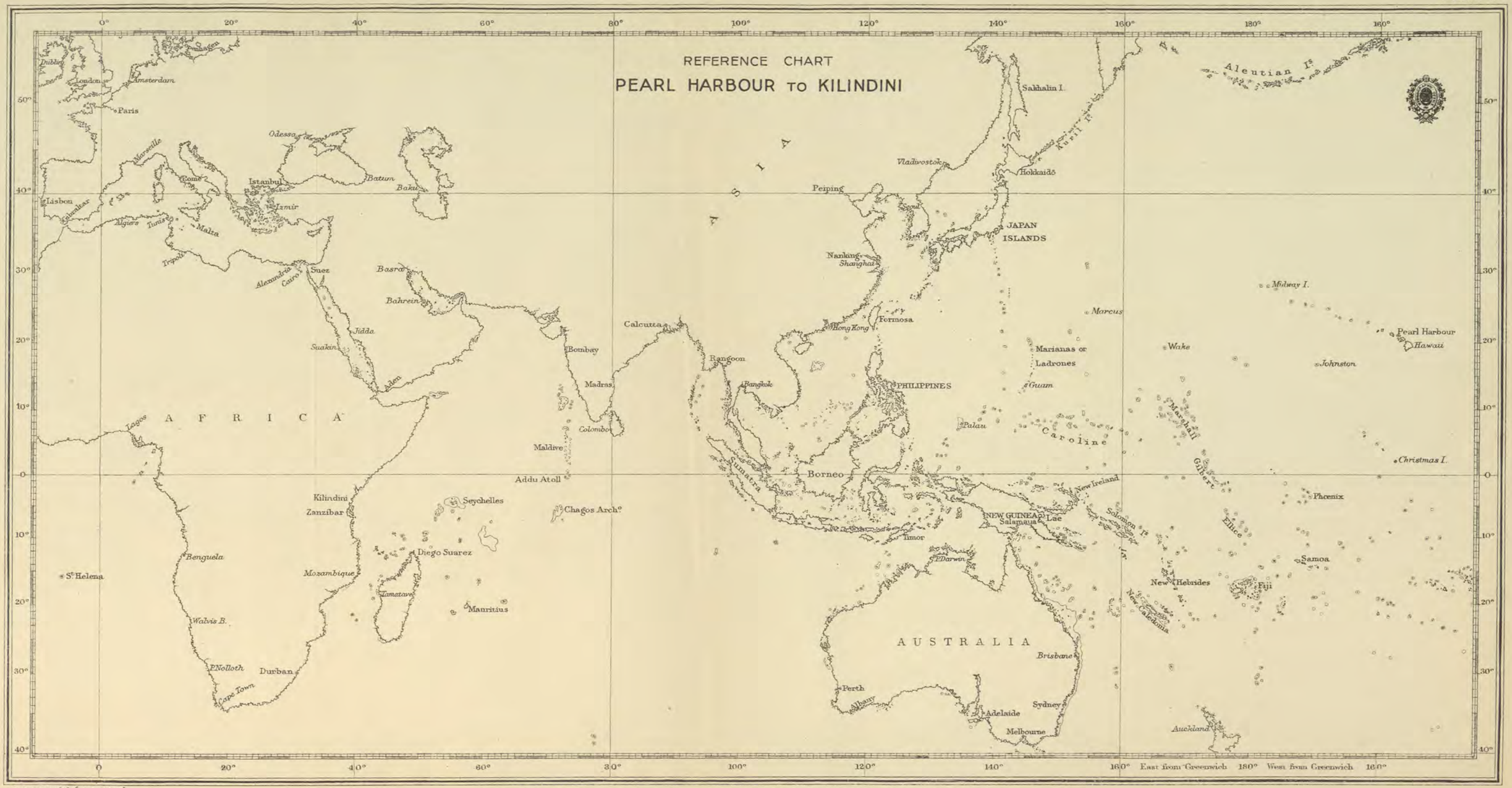
Wake
Johnston
10°
Marshall
Christmas I.
Gilbert
0
land
Phoenix
Solomon Is.
Ellice
10°
Samoa
New Hebrides
Fiji
New Caledonia
20°
30°
Auckland
40°
160° East from Greenwich 180° West from Greenwich 160°



C.B. 3081(8) (B.S.N°15)

Produced under the Superintendence of Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell, K.B.E., C.B., F.R.S., Hydrographer.

PLAN 2.

PRINCIPAL NAVAL EVENTS
29TH MARCH – 9TH APRIL 1942.
ALL TIMES ARE ZONE – 6.

KEY
BRITISH SHEWN IN RED: JAPANESE IN BLUE.
Merchant ships dispersal Anchorages....
Japanese submarines.....
Air Attacks.....

INDIA
BOMBAY
CALICUT
COCHIN
ALLEPPI
QUILON
TRIVANDRUM
C. Comorin
TUTICORIN
Dutch B.
PALK STRAIT
MADRAS
PONDICHERI.
BAY OF BENGAL
GULF OF MANAR
CEYLON
BATTICALOA
TRINCOMALEE
COLOMBO
RANGOON
C. Negrais
ANDAMAN ISLANDS
P. Blair
NICOBAR ISLANDS
NANCOWRY
Achin Hd
LACCADIVE ISLANDS
MALDIVE ISLANDS
Nine Degree Chan
Eight Degree Chan.
Kardiva Chan.
Veimandu Chan.
One & a half Degree Chan.
Equatorial Chan.
Addu Atoll.

Bahadur sunk 7/4
Clan Ross 7/4
Japanese Submarine attack on Trade 1/4 to 9/4/42
5 Merchant Ships sunk
2/4
Washingtonian sunk 6/4
1/4
6/4.
6/4
Eastern Fleet operations 5/4 - 6/4.
Dorsetshire Cornwall sunk 5/4
Force A arr'd. Noon 4/4: sailed 0001/5/4.
Force B " 1500/4/4: " 0700/5/4
Glenshiel sunk 2/4.

Japanese attack on Trade by Aircraft and surface vessels. 5/4 to 9/4.
15 Merchant ships sunk by Aircraft; 1 damaged and abandoned
8 sunk by surface craft.

Air Raid 9/4
Blenheims attack carrier 9/4
Last Enemy report PM. 9/4
Hermes, Vampire sunk 9/4
Hollyhock sunk 9/4.
Air Raid 5/4.
GULF OF MANAR 7/4
Eastern Fleet operations 31/3 – 2/4.
Jap Surface Forces, approx. 5/4.
Jap: Submarine Patrol
Catalina Patrol from Ceylon
1517/8/4 3 Battleships 1 Carrier.
1605/4/4. First report Jap: Surface Forces.

15°
10°
5°
0°
70°
75°
80°
85°
90°
95°

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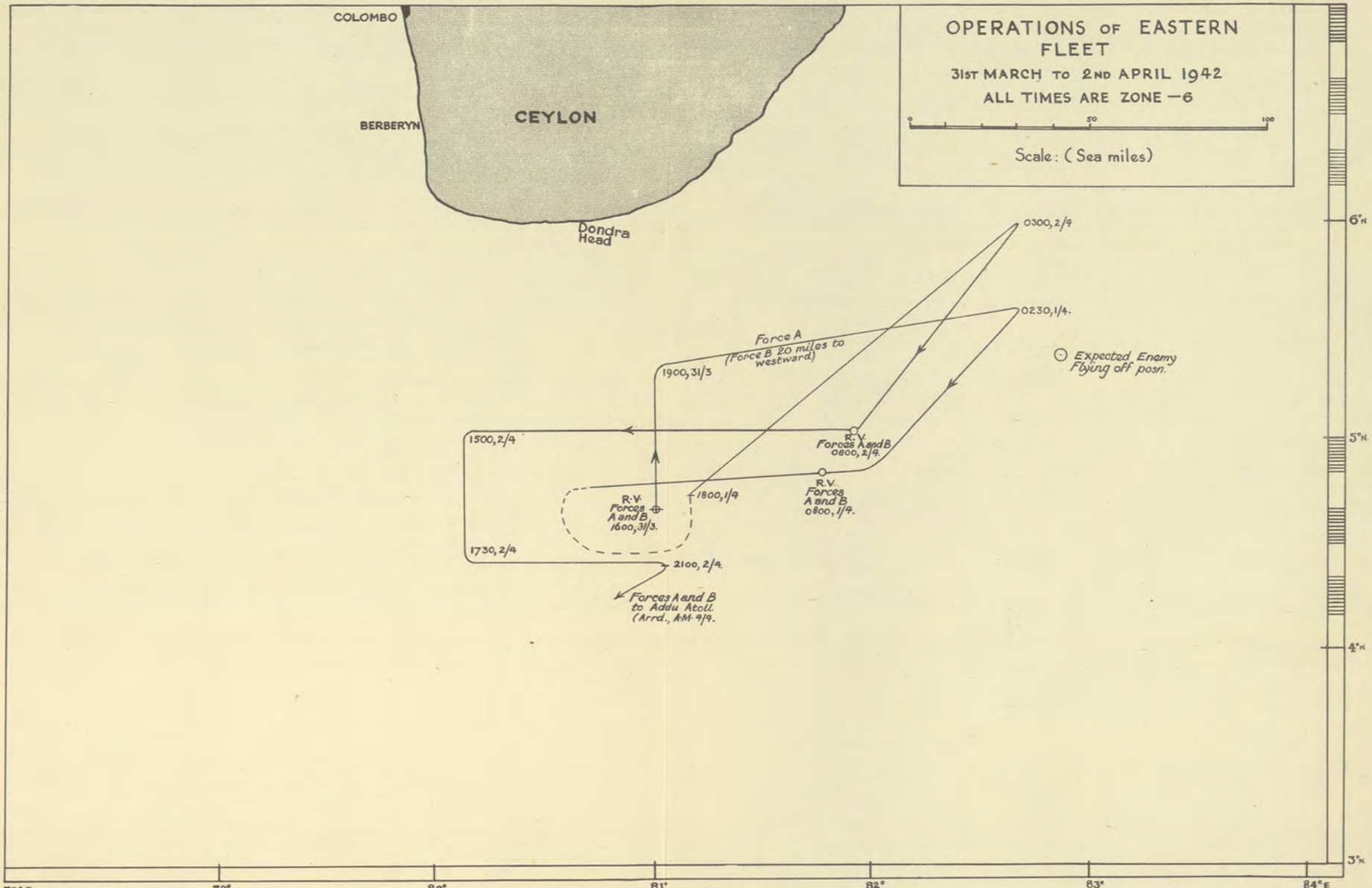
PLAN 3



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7341

TSD/HS(328)

PLAN 4.

OPERATIONS OF EASTERN FLEET

5TH - 8TH APRIL 1942

ALL TIMES ARE ZONE -6

KEY

Movements of Force A
Estimated track, Dorsetshire and Cornwall
Force A, Air searches, (5th April only, 1 to 4)
Movements of Force B
Limits of Ceylon-based Catalina Patrol
Enemy Reports — Blue

SCALE, SEA MILES

75°E 80°E 85°E 5N 0°

CEYLON
COLOMBO
Air Attack 0800, 5/4.
DONDRA HEAD

Area of operations of Eastern Fleet 31/3 to 2/4

0400, 5/4
Night A.S.V. Air Search 2100, 5/4 to 0500, 5/4
Dorsetshire and Cornwall
Air Search sent out 1830, 5/4
Air Search 1900 - 1800, 5/4
Air Search 0700 - 1100, 5/4

0815, 5/4
Carriers & 4 unknown
(Dep C.-in-C. 0809, 5/4
1009, 5/4
0730, 5/4
0698, 5/4
Battleship
2 Cruisers
(Amandat:
2 Battleships,
3 Cruisers,
Destroyers)

Dep C.-in-C. 0937, 5/4
Received 1700, 5/4
1600 Amended posn:
2 Carriers
5 unknown
Received 1817
1100, 5/4
A/C (710, 5/4
(Received 1900)
1606, 5/4
5 unknown
(Received 1658)
230°
1237, 5/4
Shad report
Wreckage reptd 754N. 5/4
1350, 5/4
Dorsetshire and Cornwall sunk.

0127, 5/4.
6 Destroyers
2237, 5/4
one destroyer
Catalina Patrol from Colombo
1605, 5/4
Large Enemy Forces (Catalina report)

Forces A and B
0700, 7/4
0200, 7/4
1115, 6/4
0730, 6/4
R.V.
Force B joins Force A 0700, 6/4
0923, 7/4
S/m rept
1800, 6/4
0928, 7/4
S/m rept
Force A
0001, 6/4
Force B
0001, 6/4
R.V.
1600, 5/4
1700, 5/4
1726 5/4
0855, 5/4
Seaplane sighted by Air search.
1800, 5/4
1930, 5/4
1900, 5/4
1893, 5/4
1800, 5/4
1000, 5/4
Force A 0800, 5/4

Vaimandu Channel
1100, 7/4
2100, 7/4
0001, 8/4
Force B 0800, 5/4
ADDU ATOLL
0730, 8/4.

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 16.

NAVAL OPERATIONS AT THE CAPTURE OF DIEGO SUAREZ (OPERATION IRONCLAD), MAY, 1942.

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6. Antsirane.
7. Port Nievre ; anchor berths during torpedo attack, 30th May, 1942.

After page 69.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.L.C.	Assault Landing Craft.	N.O.I.C.	Naval Officer in Charge.
A.M.C.	Armed Merchant Cruiser.	R.A.	Royal Artillery.
A/S	Anti-submarine.	R.A.(A)	Rear-Admiral, Carriers.
C.D.	Coast Defence.	R.D/F	Radio Direction Finder.
D, or Capt. D	Captain Commanding Destroyer Flotilla.	R.E.	Royal Engineers.
F.A.A.	Fleet Air Arm.	R.M.	Royal Marines.
F.O.O.	Forward Observation Officer.	R.N.	Royal Navy.
G.O.C.	General Officer Commanding.	S.A.A.F.	South African Air Force.
H/A	High Angle.	S.N.O.	Senior Naval Officer.
H.Q.	Headquarters.	S.N.O.(L)	Senior Naval Officer in charge of Landing.
M.L.C.	Motor Landing Craft.	W/T	Wireless Telegraphy.
		V/S	Visual Signal.

SOURCES

1. M.09213/42.. Report of Flag Officer Commanding Force " F " on the capture of Diego Suarez, and covering letter.

Enclosures

1. Operation orders.
2. Diary of events, 31st March/3rd June, 1942.
3. Reports of R.A.(A), Eastern Fleet, and Commanding Officers.
4. Bombardments.
5. Personnel and stores landed ; Courrier Bay beaches.
6. Return of Fleet labour, unloading transports, etc.
7. Anti-submarine operations.
8. Order of the day, dated 8th May, 1942.
9. Naval casualties.
10. Extracts from cypher log, S.O., Force " F," etc.

Appendices

A. Surrender negotiations.
B. Diary : proposals to capture Tamatave and Majunga.
C. Loss of H.M.S. *Auricula*.
D. Rescue of S.A.A.F. airmen by H.M.S. *Anthony*.
E. Torpedo attack on H.M.S. *Ramillies* and R.F.A. *British Loyalty*.

2. M.010791/42 Report of Major-General Sturges (War Office, 0184/122 (M.O.5)).
3. M.010953/42 Report of Commanding Officer, H.M.S. *Illustrious*.
4. M.010473/42 Proceedings of Eastern Fleet, covering " Ironclad," 2nd/10th May, 1942.
5. M.09777/42.. Report on French prisoners, on arrival in United Kingdom.
6. M.011709/42 Interrogation of French prisoners.
7. M.08615/42.. Diego Suarez : two articles from the *Natal Mercury*.
8. T.S.D.4435/42 Force " F " ; War Diary, 3rd June/9th July, 1942.
9. Telegrams, Admiralty War Registry.
10. War Diary, Historical Section.
11. C.B. 1804B.
12. South Indian Ocean Pilot, 1934, and supplement.
13. Navy Lists.

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 16

NAVAL OPERATIONS AT THE CAPTURE OF DIEGO SUAREZ, MAY, 1942

1. Introduction

The rapid advance of the Japanese to the southward at the beginning of 1942 emphasised the strategic importance of Madagascar. Roughly equidistant from Colombo and Capetown and some 400 miles nearer to Aden,[1] Diego Suarez in hostile hands would seriously menace British lines of communication with both the Middle and the Far East, while the threat to the Union of South Africa could not be ignored. Here, if anywhere, was the spot for the Germans and Japanese to join hands ; here it was imperative to avoid any repetition of the events in French Indo-China, and preparations were begun accordingly.

The fall of Singapore on 15th February, 1942, had been followed by the collapse of organised resistance in Java on 6th March, and a day later by the decision to evacuate Rangoon. Grave anxiety was felt for north-east India and Ceylon, and already air attacks were developing on Port Moresby. The newly constituted Eastern Fleet was still in process of formation. It lacked a secure base and shore-based air support. The Japanese advance was still unchecked and its limits could not be seen. Though heavy British commitments in the Middle East and elsewhere made it difficult to provide forces for operations in a new and distant theatre a start was made. As a preliminary, Durban was selected as the advanced base where the expedition would assemble and from which it would finally sail.

The task was allotted to Force " H " and on 13th March, 1942, the Admiralty warned Rear-Admiral Syfret, Flag Officer Commanding Force " H,"[2] that his force would probably be required to leave Gibraltar on 30th March, and on the 19th and 20th informed him that he had been appointed Combined Commander-in-Chief of an operation to occupy Diego Suarez, and gave details of the proposed forces and their concentration at Durban.

2. Assembly of Forces. (Plan 1.)

The naval forces assigned to the operation, which was called " Ironclad," consisted of the battleship *Malaya*,[3] (Flag, Rear-Admiral Syfret), two aircraft carriers, *Illustrious* and *Hermes*,[4] the cruisers *Devonshire* and *Hermione*, nine destroyers, six corvettes and six minesweepers. Of these the *Illustrious* was in home waters, and the *Devonshire* escorting a convoy from the West Indies to

[1] Diego Suarez to Capetown, 2,272 miles ; to Colombo, 2,165 miles ; to Aden, 1,841 miles ; to Durban, 1,527 miles.

[2] Rear-Admiral E. N. Syfret, C.B. Force " H " then consisted of the battleship *Malaya*, aircraft-carriers *Eagle* and *Argus*, cruiser *Hermione*, and destroyers *Laforey* (D.19), *Lightning*, *Lookout*, *Blankney*, *Croome*, *Exmoor*, *Active*, *Anthony*, *Whitehall*. Serious defects had developed in the *Eagle*, which had to be taken in hand at the end of March.

[3] The *Malaya* was subsequently ordered back to Freetown, and the *Ramillies* joined at Durban to take her place.

[4] The *Hermes* was sunk by Japanese aircraft off Ceylon on 9th April, and the *Indomitable* took her place.

Freetown ; they were to join Rear-Admiral Syfret at Freetown. The *Hermes* was at Ceylon and was to join him at Durban, as were the minesweepers (14th Flotilla), then on passage to the Cape of Good Hope, and the corvettes, most of which were already in South African waters. All were to be ready to leave Durban by 25th/26th April.[1]

The military forces were under the command of Major-General Sturges[2] and consisted of two infantry brigade groups[3] and a Commando. The 29th Infantry Brigade group, under Brigadier-General Festing,[4] and No. 5 Commando were embarked in the assault ships *Keren, Karanja, Winchester Castle* and *Sobieski*, which were sailing from the United Kingdom in Convoy WS17, due at Freetown 6th April. The 17th Infantry Brigade group, under Brigadier-General Tarleton[5], formed the floating reserve in the transports *Duchess of Atholl* and *Oronsay*, also sailing in Convoy WS17. Their motor transport and stores were preceding them in the *Empire Kingsley, Thalatta* and *Mahout*, which had left the United Kingdom in Convoy OS22 on 13th March, and the *City of Hongkong* in Convoy OS23, due to sail on 23rd March, with directions to await Rear-Admiral Syfret's orders at Durban. The motor landing craft carrier *Derwentdale* was to be ready at Durban to embark 14 M.L.C.s from various ships in Convoy WS17 on arrival, and the tank landing ship *Bachaquero* was also to join the force there. All naval forces employed were known as Force " F," and Rear-Admiral Syfret was directed to sail those based on Gibraltar so as to meet the assault ships at Freetown, and escort them thence to Durban.

Rear-Admiral Syfret in the *Malaya* (Captain C. Coppinger), with the destroyers *Laforey* (D.19), *Lightning, Active, Duncan* and *Anthony*, left Gibraltar at 0300, 1st April, and proceeded to the westward. The *Hermione*, which had been left to pick up stores and personnel, followed a few hours later.

On the evening of 2nd April, the Admiralty informed Rear-Admiral Syfret that the *Richelieu* with three 6-in. cruisers would probably leave Dakar next day (3rd April) and that the *Strasbourg* might be expected there 5th April ; the *Illustrious* and *Devonshire* had been ordered to Freetown at high speed to fuel. During the night instructions were received from the Admiralty to spread Force " F " to locate the *Richelieu* and prevent her from going north ; course was altered accordingly closer inshore, and the *Active, Anthony* and *Duncan* were each given 100 tons of fuel from the *Malaya* so as to be ready for emergencies. Nothing, however, was seen of her and early on 6th April the Admiralty cancelled the special movements for her interception.

Force " F " arrived at Freetown at 1315, 6th April. Convoy WS17 had already arrived there and Rear-Admiral Syfret lost no time in holding preliminary discussions on " Ironclad " with Major-General Sturges, Captain Garnons-Williams, R.N.,[6] who had been appointed S.N.O. in charge of landings at Diego Suarez (S.N.O.L.), and Brigadier-General Festing, the Military Assault Commander. Captain Waller, R.N.,[7] who had been representing the Commander-in-Chief in London during the initial planning of the operation, joined at this time to take over command of the *Malaya* from Captain Coppinger who was

[1] The final composition of the naval forces, with their Commanding Officers, which took part in the capture of Diego Suarez will be found in Appendix A.

[2] Major-General R. G. Sturges, C.B., Royal Marines.

[3] Subsequently increased to three infantry brigade groups.

[4] Brigadier-General F. W. Festing.

[5] Brigadier-General G. W. B. Tarleton, M.C.

[6] Captain G. A. Garnons-Williams, D.S.C., R.N.

[7] Captain J. W. A. Waller, R.N.

due for relief.[1] Captain Garnons-Williams had already informed the Admiralty of requirements at Durban and arranged for two of the Army officers to fly there from Freetown.

The forces began to assemble and the *Illustrious, Devonshire*, and destroyers *Pakenham, Javelin, Inconstant* and *Lookout* joined Force " F." The *Devonshire* sailed on 7th April with a convoy for Durban, with orders to rejoin the flag off the Cape of Good Hope. During the next two days (7th/9th April) various arrangements were put in train, and on 9th April, Force " F," now consisting of the *Malaya* (flag), *Illustrious, Hermione* and destroyers *Pakenham* (D.12), *Duncan, Inconstant, Active, Anthony, Laforey* (D.19), *Lookout, Lightning*, and *Javelin* sailed from Freetown (9th April), escorting Convoy WS17A which was composed of 10 ships—the *Oronsay* (Commodore), *Winchester Castle*, in which were Major-General Sturges and Captain Garnons-Williams, *Duchess of Atholl, Keren, Karanja, Sobieski, Rembrandt, Bhutan, Windsor Castle* and *Port Wyndham*.[2]

The passage was uneventful, the *Hermione* and destroyers fuelling by groups at St. Helena between 13th April and 16th April. On 17th April a message was received from the Admiralty that the 13th Infantry Brigade Group, under Brigadier-General Russell,[3] then on passage to India in the *Franconia* with their motor transport in the *Nairnbank* and *Martand*, would join the expedition at Durban as an additional floating reserve.

At 0600,[4] 19th April, the *Illustrious* and four destroyers were detached, so as to arrive at Capetown before dark. A few hours later the *Devonshire* rejoined the flag and took over the convoy, and the *Malaya* with the remaining destroyers proceeded to Capetown, arriving about 1900[4], 19th April. On arrival, Rear-Admiral Syfret transferred his flag to the *Illustrious*, orders having been received for the *Malaya* to return to Freetown. The *Hermione*, which had developed leaks, was sent to Simonstown for immediate repairs. One night only was spent at Capetown. After discussing various movements of ships affecting operation " Ironclad " with the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic,[5] Rear-Admiral Syfret was received by the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa—Field-Marshal Smuts—and the provision of aircraft by the S.A.A.F. for Diego Suarez after its capture was considered at a meeting at which the Chief of the Union General Staff, General Sir Piers Ryneveldt,[6] was present. The Prime Minister considered that the capture of Tamatave[7] and Majunga[7] should also be undertaken, and stated that he intended to cable this opinion to London the following day.

Rear-Admiral Syfret left Capetown for Durban in the *Illustrious* with the destroyers at 0700[4] the next morning (20th April), arriving after an exceptionally

[1] Rear-Admiral Syfret states that during the operation he frequently found himself much handicapped owing to not having been present at the inception of the planning, and therefore not being completely in tune with the ideas that lay behind certain signals. He recommends that in future, if possible, the Commander-in-Chief designate should be present at the start. This would give him a much clearer idea of the Government's view on certain questions of policy than can be gained by merely having a representative in London, particularly if (as in this case) circumstances deprive him of his representative before the operation commences.

[2] The *Dominion Monarch*, a ship unconnected with operation " Ironclad," joined the convoy till clear of submarine waters.

[3] Brigadier-General V. C. Russell, D.S.O., M.C.

[4] Zone, −2.

[5] Vice-Admiral W. E. C. Tait, C.B., M.V.O.

[6] General Sir Piers van Ryneveldt, K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.

[7] *See* Plan 1.

calm passage at 1300[1] (22nd April). After a conference on the latest developments with General Sturges and Captain Garnons-Williams, and a meeting with the Commodore, Durban,[2] to arrange for the requirements of Force " F," Rear-Admiral Syfret transferred his flag to the *Ramillies*, which had arrived from Kilindini the previous day to take the place of the *Malaya*.

3. Final Preparations

Rear-Admiral Syfret remained at Durban from 22nd April to 28th April. During this period final preparations were made. Close liaison was established with the Union of South Africa Government, and Colonel Melville,[3] S.A.A.F., with two other officers, was attached to the Admiral's staff for the operation, Major Ransome,[4] S.O.(I) to the Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic, acting as Liaison Officer at Pretoria. It was decided that units of the South African Air Force would be despatched after the capture of the Diego Suarez aerodrome and the problem of getting these there was examined.

Information was received from the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet,[5] of his intended movements to cover operation " Ironclad," and a rendezvous was fixed for the *Indomitable*, which had been ordered to take the place of the *Hermes* in Force " F."

These were strenuous days. Cargoes of ships not " assault stowed " had to be restowed as far as possible, motor transport serviced and water-proofed, all landing craft had to be fuelled, tested, and allocated to their respective ships, dan buoys, taut wire measuring gear and other special stores, including chart folios, maps, photographs and intelligence data distributed to ships concerned. W/T and R/T sets in all ships were " netted " and tuned ; stores and personnel were allotted as necessary ; special arrangements were made for communication with the S.A.A.F., and for broadcast services to cover the area of operations. All was completed by the date fixed for sailing, and Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks in his report " that a programme of departure arranged so far ahead as it was, and entailing so much unloading and reloading of transports, assembly of ships from many distant places, docking and making good defects, and supplying of so many stores, ammunition, etc., was kept to, reflects the greatest credit on all concerned. The port authorities did splendid work and loyally responded to the many calls made on them."

Meanwhile, daily conferences had been held between Rear-Admiral Syfret, Major-General Sturges and Captain Garnons-Williams, and the finishing touches had been put to the plan of operations. This will now be considered in some detail.

4. Plan of Operation. (Plans 2, 3, 4.)

The object of the operation was " to capture and hold the naval and air base at Diego Suarez." The attitude of the French could not be foreseen with any certainty but it was assumed they would offer resistance, and the maximum opposition was catered for. At the same time it was laid down that

[1] Zone, —2.

[2] Commodore B. C. S. Martin.

[3] Colonel S. A. Melville, O.B.E., S.A.A.F. Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks that he " proved a valuable addition to my Staff and showed the keenest interest in the outcome of the operation."

[4] Major Cedric Ransome, R.M.

[5] Admiral Sir James F. Somerville, K.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O.

the British forces should not be the first to open fire, except against submarines and aircraft. The probable scale of opposition was estimated to be :—

Naval	..	One or two escort vessels. Two armed merchant cruisers. Five submarines.
Military	..	1,500–3,000 troops (including natives). Nine coast defence batteries.
Air	..	Seventeen Morane 406 fighters at Diego Suarez. Ten Potez Type 63 bombers and eight Potez Type 25 bombers (obsolete) at Ivato (Lat. 18° 47′ S., Long. 47° 29′ E.).

Diego Suarez Bay (*see* Plan 2) is approached by a narrow channel, Oronjia Pass, three-quarters of a mile in width, the entrance to which is on the east coast of Madagascar, 17 miles from Cape Amber, the northernmost point of the island. A fine harbour, surrounded by thickly-wooded land, generally about 260 ft. high, it comprises within its limits four smaller bays—Baie du Tonnerre on the north, and Baie des Cailloux Blancs on the north-west, while to the south of the entrance lies Baie des Francais, west of which is the narrow harbour of Port Nievre. On the peninsula between Baie des Francais and Port Nievre is the naval base of Antsirane, some 5 miles south of which is the airport.

Diego Suarez Bay cuts so deeply into Madagascar as almost to sever the land lying to the northward from the rest of the island, the width of the isthmus thus formed varying between 2½ and 6 miles. To the westward of this isthmus are several bays which, though difficult of access, are capable of accommodating a considerable fleet. Oronjia Pass was known to be heavily defended, but the bays on the west coast—only 10 or 12 miles from Antsirane as the crow flies—were believed to be protected by two batteries only, and a possible minefield. This was the spot chosen for the landing.

The scheme was briefly as follows. Force " F " was to leave Durban in two convoys—a slow convoy containing stores, etc., 10 days before the day of the assault, and a fast convoy carrying personnel 3 days later. Proceeding up the Mozambique Channel by special routes,[1] the convoys were to rendezvous during the afternoon of the day before the assault in a position (W), about 95 miles west of Cape Amber, whence the final approach would be made. The assault transports would enter, led in by minesweepers, and anchor some 3 to 6 miles from the shore.

At zero hour on day 1—provisionally fixed as 0430, 5th May[2]—a landing would be made by the troops of No. 5 Commando in Courrier Bay, to capture the two coast defence batteries there, and then push eastwards to secure the Andrakaka Peninsula, which forms the north-west shore of Port Nievre ; a simultaneous landing would be made in Ambararata Bay by the four battalions of the 29th Brigade to secure a bridgehead and advance along the road which runs thence to Antsirane.[3]

As soon as the batteries in Courrier Bay had been secured, the transports were to shift from their temporary anchorage off Nosi Hara, some 10 miles from the shore to Ambararata Bay, where unloading was to proceed. Hangars and

[1] These routes conformed with the normal shipping routes along the coast till in Lat. 15° S., when they ran E.N.E. as though to pass north of Madagascar.

[2] Zone —3 Time is used throughout, unless otherwise stated. On 5th May, sunrise was at 0551 ; twilight commenced 0504. High water at Courrier Bay, 0652 (8 ft.).

[3] Clearly the success of the initial landings would depend largely on surprise. Every precaution had been taken from the inception of the operation to conceal its destination ; but Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks that " during the stay at Durban, Madagascar was a popular topic of conversation ashore, and from many sources people were heard to be guessing or asserting that it was the convoys' destination."

aircraft, as well as any submarines in harbour, were to be attacked by the Fleet Air Arm half an hour after zero hour (0500). At the same time a diversion was to be staged by the *Hermione* off Ambode Vahibe, some 10 miles south of Oronjuia Pass, on the east coast of Madagascar.

After the assault landing, the military objectives were firstly to capture Antsirane town and airport, and secondly to silence the batteries on Oronjia Peninsula, after which the whole area was to be cleared of enemy resistance. Supporting fire would be provided by H.M. ships throughout the operations.

The whole naval force and transports were then to enter Diego Suarez Bay, and proceed with the work of landing stores and establishing the garrison on shore.

To carry this plan into effect, detailed instructions were issued to all concerned which enabled this complicated operation to proceed in the event almost exactly as planned.

From the naval point of view the first difficulty was navigational (*see* Plan 2). Courrier and Ambararata Bays lie on the south-eastern side of a bight some 5 miles deep and 15 miles wide, between Voailava Point on the north and Potopoto Hill on the south. From Voailava Point a practically continuous chain of reefs extends in a south-south-westerly direction for a distance of 8 miles, 5 miles to seaward of and roughly parallel to the shore. Immediately south of these reefs and 8 miles to the west of Courrier Bay is the island of Nosi Hara, about 400 ft. high and 2 miles long. Scattered islets and reefs extend some 20 miles to seaward in a westerly direction, and between Nosi Hara and Potopoto Hill—a distance of 5 miles, traversed by three channels, each about a mile in width. Through this difficult passage, unlighted and possibly mined, the Fleet had to make its way. For the final approach and landing, Force "F" was organised in five groups, as follows:—

I. *Ramillies* (flag), *Indomitable, Illustrious, Hermione* and eight destroyers.
II. *Laforey* (Senior Officer), one corvette, six minesweepers.
III. *Devonshire* (Senior Officer), *Winchester Castle, Royal Ulsterman*, one destroyer.
IV. *Keren* (Senior Officer), *Karanja, Sobieski, Derwentdale* (motor landing craft carrier), *Bachaquero* (tank landing craft), and three corvettes.
V. *Pakenham* (Senior Officer), two corvettes, 10 transports, store ships and auxiliaries.

On reaching the dispersal point, position W, Group I was to take up a suitable covering position to the westward of Cape Amber. The *Devonshire* (Captain R. D. Oliver, Senior Officer of Groups II to V) was to act as guide of the convoy for the final approach, to be conducted as follows: Destroyers were to make the landfall at Nosi Anamba (Lat. 12° 15½′ S., Long. 48° 59′ E., 21 miles west of Nosi Hara) and to buoy a route north of Nosi Fati and thence between Nosi Hara and Nosi Amjambavolo, passing through the lettered positions shown in Plan 3. Minesweepers in Group II were to sweep this channel, and Groups III, IV and V following them were to anchor in the channel off Nosi Hara. At this point Captain Garnons-Williams in the *Keren* was to assume the duties of Senior Naval Officer for the landing operations and take over the naval direction of events in the anchorage.

Four beaches (*see* Plan 4), known as Red, White, Green and Blue, were selected for the landings—the Red beach in the north part of Courrier Bay, the White and Green beaches in Ambararata Bay, and the Blue beach at Basse Point, between the two bays. At zero hour (0430) simultaneous landings were to be made at the Red beach by troops from the *Winchester Castle*, closely followed by troops from the *Royal Ulsterman*, and at the Green and White

beaches by those embarked in the *Keren* and *Karanja* respectively. These landings were to be followed by a landing at the Blue beach by the remainder of the troops in the *Royal Ulsterman* as soon as the assault craft returned from the first landing on Red beach.

As soon as Groups III and IV were anchored off Nosi Hara the assault craft were to be lowered and loaded, and minesweepers were to sweep and buoy the channel from the anchorage to a position off Courrier Bay known as JJ; to this position the *Winchester Castle's* assault craft were to proceed when ready, and from it they were to take their final departure so as to reach the Red beach at zero hour. The *Royal Ulsterman* was to follow them, anchor in position JJ a quarter of an hour before zero hour, and load her troops into her cobles, which were to be ready to shove off at zero hour for the Red beach. The landing craft from the *Keren* and *Karanja* were to be despatched so as to reach the Green and White beaches at zero hour, being either guided by Lorenz gear direct from the *Keren*, or led by a corvette to the entrance of Ambararata Bay as the S.N.O.(L) might decide. The floating reserve in the *Sobieski* was to stand by to land in R-boats and rush the batteries under cover of naval fire and air attack, in event of the failure of the initial assault on the Red beach, and the *Bachaquero* was to be in instant readiness to land her cargo at the Blue beach as soon as the necessary reconnaissance had been carried out. At daylight the minesweepers were to sweep an anchorage off Ambararata Bay, to which the whole convoy was to shift on receipt of the success signal from Nos. 7 and 8 batteries and carry on with the disembarkation of troops and stores.

Throughout the operation, the possibility of interference by the Japanese either at sea or in Diego Suarez could not be ignored, and all ships were cautioned to be prepared for this eventuality. A proportion of the air striking forces was to be held in readiness and it was laid down that "the destruction of Japanese forces is to be given priority over all other operations, except the attack on the aerodrome.[1]"

5. Passage from Durban

On 25th April the slow convoy (Convoy "Y") consisting of the *Empire Kingsley* (Commodore), *Bachaquero, Easedale, Derwentdale, Martand, Mahout, Nairnbank* and *Thalatta*, escorted by the *Devonshire, Active, Duncan*, corvettes *Freesia, Fritillary, Thyme, Jasmine*, and minesweepers *Cromer, Poole, Auricula, Nigella, Romney* and *Cromarty*, sailed from Durban. The *City of Hong Kong*, which had not then arrived, followed the next day, escorted by the corvettes *Genista* and *Cyclamen*.

The fast convoy (Convoy "Z"), consisting of the *Oronsay* (Commodore), *Keren* (assault headquarter ship), *Karanja, Royal Ulsterman, Winchester Castle, Sobieski, Duchess of Atholl* and *Franconia*, left Durban during the forenoon of 28th April, escorted by the *Ramillies* wearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Syfret, *Illustrious, Hermione, Pakenham* (D.12 and S.O. Destroyers), *Laforey* (D.19), *Lightning, Lookout, Javelin* and *Inconstant*.

Major-General Sturges, accompanied by Colonel Melville, S.A.A.F., Major Carmichael, Intelligence Officer lent by the G.O.C., East Africa, and two staff officers, was embarked in the *Ramillies*.

[1] Catalina patrols were established by the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, in Long. 75° 20′ E. between Lats. 9° 05′ S. and 11° 40′ S. from 30th April to 6th May, and in Long. 60° 55′ E. between Lats. 4° 25′ S. and 7° 00′ S. from 3rd May to 9th May (*see* Plan 1). During the operation, the Eastern Fleet consisting of the *Warspite* (Flag, Admiral Sir James Somerville), *Resolution* (Flag, Vice-Admiral A. U. Willis), *Formidable, Newcastle* (Flag, Rear-Admiral W. B. Tennant), *Emerald, Enterprise, Caledon, Dragon* and seven destroyers operated between 130 and 220 miles to the eastward of Diego Suarez.

Before sailing a routine convoy conference had been held at naval headquarters for each convoy, at which their destination was given as Mombasa; but a secret demonstration of the actual assault had been given on board the *Winchester Castle* to the masters of the ships and a limited number of naval and military officers.

Although all preparations had been made and the expedition had actually left its advanced base, it was not until the night of 1st May that the Admiral received definite orders from the Admiralty to carry out the assault.[1] Signals had been received on 25th April and 29th April extending its scope to include the subsequent capture of Majunga and Tamatave, and operation orders for these assaults were got out during the passage.

In compliance with further instructions from the Admiralty (A.M.1958B/1/5), it was arranged that a number of letters addressed to the Governor of Diego Suarez should be dropped by aircraft during the initial air attacks. These letters stressed the necessity of the Allied occupation, guaranteed the return of the territory to France after the war, and requested surrender in order to avoid bloodshed. Brigadier Festing and the battalion commanders of the assault force were also provided with copies of this " ultimatum " in case it should prove possible to send it by a captured officer.[2]

The passage up the Mozambique Channel was made in good weather and, contrary to expectation, favourable currents necessitated reduction of speed to avoid being ahead of time at the rendezvous with the slow convoy. A report on 2nd May of a submarine at Majunga and of others in mid-channel caused Rear-Admiral Syfret " some apprehension " lest his movements were being anticipated. A/S air patrols were maintained for the rest of the passage, but they sighted nothing. At 0835, 3rd May, the *Indomitable*, wearing the flag of R.A.(A),[3] Eastern Fleet, with the destroyers *Panther* and *Paladin*, joined, and early that afternoon Convoy " Y " was sighted. Weather conditions were excellent, with extreme visibility. The sun shone in a clear sky and Mayotta Island (Comoros) could be seen some 40 miles off during most of the day.

Convoy " Y," too, had had a favourable passage, with the wind and sea on the quarter. This had enabled the tank landing craft *Bachaquero*, which had been a source of anxiety, to keep up without damage to her bows. As in the case of Convoy " Z," adverse currents allowed for had failed to materialise, and large alterations of course had to be made to avoid reaching the rendezvous too soon. During the passage all the destroyers and small craft had been fuelled from the *Easedale*, which also completed the *Hermione* and destroyers of Convoy " Z " after making contact.

By dusk, 3rd May, the fast convoy had closed to within about 4 miles of the slow convoy, and it maintained this position till the final approach on the following afternoon. Currents were again deceptive and an unexpected set putting them ahead of time had to be corrected by large alterations of course during the forenoon of 4th May.

[1] This meant that the operation orders could not be generally released till 2nd May (Day −3) which allowed barely sufficient time for their study. Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks that, if possible, instructions on Government policy should be issued prior to the departure of an expedition from its base. On this occasion important instructions were being received up to 1925, 3rd May, by which time it was undesirable to break wireless silence to obtain amplification, or the repetition of corrupt groups.

[2] *See* Appendix C. A reply was broadcast 2 hours 41 minutes after the initial landing.

[3] Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C. A complete set of operation orders was at once flown over to Rear-Admiral Boyd, but Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks that this allowed him less than 48 hours to study and arrange the many and complicated air commitments. Certain modifications suggested by Rear-Admiral Boyd were approved. A summary of the air tasks will be found in Appendix D.

At noon, 4th May, the flagship was some 95 miles west of Courrier Bay[1] and at 1430 Group I (*Ramillies*, *Indomitable*, *Illustrious*, *Hermione* and seven destroyers[2]) parted company and steered for the covering position west of Cape Amber. At 1500 the signal was made to proceed in execution of previous orders, and Groups II to V formed up for the final approach.

6. Final Approach. (Plans 3, 4, 5.)

The cruising order for the final approach is shown in Plan 5. Captain Oliver of the *Devonshire* was the Senior Officer, with the task of bringing the convoy of 34 ships safely to its anchorage. It had 88 miles to go, most of it in the dark.[3]

Commenting on this stage of the operations, Captain Oliver remarks that " the latter part of the passage required a very high degree of skill in navigation, since the convoy passed through a portion of the Mozambique Channel where strong and unpredictable currents are to be expected. The enemy were caught unawares because they thought such a passage impossible at night.[4] Difficulty was experienced in regulating both the speed and the course of the convoy without signal, in order to arrive at the right time at the right place."

At 1800, 4th May, the *Laforey* (Captain Hutton), with the *Lightning* and *Anthony* were detached to make a landfall off Nosi Anambo, and proceeded to the south-east. At 1950 a suspicious vessel was reported and the division was about to attack with torpedoes at 2021 when it was found to be a distant island. Twenty minutes later shallow soundings raised doubts as to their position, but at 2100 a white light was seen on Nosi Anambo and at 2122 the moon rose silhouetting a tower on the island. Half an hour later the first buoy was laid (ZA), and course was shaped for Nosi Fati shoal, which was found without difficulty, both land and breakers showing up well in the moonlight.

Then started the buoyage of the channel.

At 2310 No. 1 main channel buoy was laid; the *Lightning* anchored off it, and at 2340 switched on the prearranged lights (green, white, red) to seaward, while the *Anthony* went to inform the convoy that these buoys were in place, and the *Laforey* went on laying the remainder in the 15-mile channel to Nosi Hara. This was an easy task, as the channel between Nosi Hara and Nosi Anjombavola could be seen clearly in the moonlight, and no appreciable set was experienced. The weather was so clear and conditions so favourable for boat work that further reconnaissance was unnecessary, and after dropping the last buoy, she turned back at 0003/5. The convoy could be seen just entering the channel; its ships were clearly visible to the naked eye. Watching them " with some foreboding," Captain Hutton stood to the westward. At 0026 he reported " Channel O.K. No cross set " to the *Devonshire* and *Keren*, then, turning, took station astern of the minesweepers.

[1] In Lat. 12° 15′ 5″ S., Long. 47° 28′ E.

[2] The *Anthony* belonging to this group was ordered to join Group II, and proceed inshore with the *Laforey* and *Lightning*, subsequently rejoining Rear-Admiral Syfret and reporting the progress made in buoying the channel.

[3] From point of dispersal (W) through position AA (Lat. 11° 48′ S., Long. 48° 06′ E.); speed had to be adjusted so that the *Winchester Castle* with the assault party should anchor punctually at 0200/5.

[4] An extract from a Memoire Militaire subsequently captured at Windsor Castle battery reads :—" Tir de nuit n'est pas envisagé, l'acces de la Baie étant consideré comme impossible de nuit." (" Firing at night is not contemplated, the entrance to the bay being considered impossible at night.")

The *Devonshire*, meanwhile, with Groups IV and V astern, had been groping her way in. It was quite dark at 1840, 4th May, but star sights showed that the north-easterly set allowed for had in effect been running the other way during the afternoon carrying her some 5 miles to the south-westward of her intended position. She altered course without signal at 1900 to correct this and her screen not immediately observing the alteration, got a long way out of station. At 2100 the high land on Cape Sebastian was sighted, and a reasonably good fix was obtained by visual bearing and R.D/F. range. More land was sighted after moonrise, and at 2150 the jagged peak of Windsor Castle[1] was identified 40 miles away and an accurate fix placed the *Devonshire* 298°, 18 miles from position ZB. Course was altered to 118° at 2200, and speed reduced to 8½ knots.

At 2312 another good fix showed that she had been set 2¼ miles to the northward, placing her 330°, 6 miles from position ZB, and course was altered to 138° at 2318. Twenty minutes later the *Lightning's* three vertical lights shone out and navigation was no longer difficult. At 2342, 4th May, the *Anthony* passed close alongside and reported there was no set though the outer dan buoy had drifted to the south-westward. Course was altered to follow the minesweepers which could be seen clearly ahead, and the *Lightning* was passed 6 cables abeam to starboard at 0008, 5th May, showing that the *Devonshire* had passed position ZB 33 minutes ahead of time. The right-hand edge of Nosi Hara selected as a leading mark was clearly visible, bearing 114°, but it was not easy to follow the passage as several of the dans had broken adrift and it was difficult to see which sweepers were sweeping. Actually their work had come to a sudden halt. Owing to the outer dan being to the south-west of its intended position, the sweepers had gone too close to Nosi Fati shoal, and all four had parted their sweeps. Nothing was known of this at the time, and it was supposed that the channel was being swept according to plan, though in fact it was not being swept at all. Fortunately, no mines had been laid so far to seaward.

At 0130, 5th May, the ships in Group III passed between Nosi Hara and Nosi Anjombavola. Before them lay Ambararata Bay. At 0154 the *Winchester Castle* came noiselessly to an anchor, the *Royal Ulsterman* and *Lightning* standing by to the north-eastward of her. The troops were all drawn up and her assault craft were lowered and manned. The *Devonshire* anchored some 3½ cables to the eastward of Nosi Hara, ready to open fire on the enemy's batteries under Windsor Castle. She lay invisible against the background of the island. Through unlit and tortuous channels studded with rocks and shoals the ships had been brought safely to their anchorage.[2]

Silently, Groups IV and V entered and took up their berths, anchoring some 10 minutes earlier than planned, and Captain Garnons-Williams in the *Keren* took over the naval direction of affairs.[3]

[1] A conspicuous hill, 1,303 ft. high, on the level ridge between Diego Suarez and Courrier Bay.

[2] Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks :—" This was greatly to the credit of all, but particularly so to the Commanding Officer, *Devonshire*, on whom lay the main responsibility." Captain Hutton who buoyed the channel in the *Laforey*, and Acting Commander Crick who led in the corvette *Freesia*, also played important parts.

[3] Acting Captain Garnons-Williams was junior to Captains Oliver, Stevens, (D.12) and Hutton (D.19) ; in his report on the landing operations he pays tribute to " their full and generous acceptance " of being placed under his orders. He also remarks that a feature of the whole operation was the loyal co-operation and friendship which existed between all arms of both services.

7. Assault Landing, 5th May, 1942. (Plan 4.)

While the assault craft were being manned, the *Romney* and *Cromarty*, " accurately and steadfastly "[1] led by the *Freesia*, commenced to sweep the 8-mile channel from the *Winchester Castle's* berth to position JJ. They were closely followed by the *Laforey* leading the *Winchester Castle's* flotilla (No. 5 Commando and one company of 2nd East Lancashire Regt.), with the *Lightning*[2] and *Royal Ulsterman* some distance astern. During this passage about 17 mines were cut. At 0300 one detonated in the *Romney's* sweep, but no sign of life came from the French garrison ashore. A quarter of an hour later another mine exploded ; all waited for the expected fusillade, but to their surprise the quiet of the summer night remained undisturbed. The garrison was evidently sleeping soundly, and at 0330 the dispersal point (JJ) was reached and the flotilla moved off towards the Red beaches, while the *Royal Ulsterman* silently anchored and commenced loading her cobles. Meanwhile, the flotillas from the *Keren* (1st Royal Scots Fusiliers) and *Karanja* (2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers) had left at 0253 and 0319 for the Green and White beaches respectively.

The navigation of the landing craft was as good as that of their parent ships ; all made accurate landings and the assault was carried out exactly as planned.[3] Despite the explosions of the mines, complete surprise was achieved, and all three beaches and No. 7 battery were carried without loss. Blue beach was then assaulted. Here opposition was experienced, but it was overcome by troops which had landed at White beach, who crossed the peninsula and took the defenders in the rear.

Simultaneously with these landings, the *Hermione* was carrying out her diversion on the east coast, consisting of a demonstration with delay action smoke floats, rockets, and the firing of star shell to burst over the beach at the head of Ambodi Vahibe Bay. She then established a patrol off the entrance to Diego Suarez Bay which she maintained for the rest of the day without incident, except for a short engagement (0643 to 0655) with No. 1 coast defence battery, Oronjia, which she outranged at 18,000 yards.

Half an hour after the initial landing, air attacks by the F.A.A. developed on French shipping in Diego Suarez harbour and on Antsirane aerodrome.[4] The former, carried out by 18 Swordfish from the *Illustrious* armed with torpedoes, bombs and depth-charges,[5] proved very effective. The A.M.C. *Bougainville* was hit by a torpedo, the submarine *Beveziers* was sunk by depth-charges, and the sloop *D'Entrecasteaux*, a submarine and A/A batteries were narrowly missed by bombs. Fighter protection was provided by eight Martlets, which demonstrated over the town during the attack. One Swordfish was brought down.[6]

[1] Report of Captain Garnons-Williams. The *Freesia* was drawing 16 ft.

[2] The *Lightning* had been relieved by the *Genista* as lightship off Nosi Fati at 0035, and had then proceeded up the Channel to join the *Royal Ulsterman*.

[3] Commenting on the navigational aspect of the whole operation, Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks :—" The skill, coolness, and accuracy with which these ships and craft were brought safely through a most difficult channel bristling with mines, is above all praise and is a shining example of devotion to duty."

[4] The aircraft were ordered to keep over 7 miles from the shore till 15 minntes after zero hour (0445), and then to attack from the east coast.

[5] It was emphasised in the operation orders that submarines were the main objective of this attack.

[6] The crew was rescued by the French, and released after the capture of Antsirane.

At the same time six Albacores from the *Indomitable* carried out a low-level bombing attack on Antsirane airport. Here, again, the surprise was complete and the hangars, which were full of aircraft, were left burning.[1] This was followed by an attack with incendiary bullets by eight sea Hurricanes.[2]

After these main air attacks, three Swordfish dropped dummy parachutists in a valley 6 miles W.S.W. of Ambodi Vahibe Bay, to strengthen the effect of the *Hermione's* diversion.[3] Fighter patrols were then established over the town, beaches and transports, and an anti-submarine patrol off the entrance to Diego Suarez harbour.

At 0545 the "success" signal from No. 7 battery was received, and Captain Garnons-Williams, who was not aware that mines had been found in the vicinity of position HH, ordered the *Keren, Karanja, Sobieski, Winchester Castle* and *Bachaquero* to shift to the main anchorage off Ambararata Bay. The three former were still loading their second flight of landing craft, but the *Winchester Castle* and *Bachaquero* at once got under way. By that time it was broad daylight and they were seen by the *Devonshire* advancing up the swept channel. Just at that moment Captain Oliver received a signal from the *Romney* that she had exploded two mines just north of the anchorage. He therefore ordered the two ships to stop, while he informed the S.N.O.(L), who cancelled the movement until the new anchorage was swept.

By 0620, 5th May, about 2,000 troops had been landed, but the turn round for the landing craft was very long. Reports of a successful advance and the capture of prisoners began to come in.

At 0750 Group IV, followed by the remainder of the convoy, shifted berth to the main anchorage, which by that time had been swept by the *Cromer, Poole, Auricula* and *Nigella*. No mines had been found in the actual anchorage, but about a mile to the north-west, the *Cromer* and *Auricula* cut seven in quick succession and cut six more and detonated one in the same position shortly afterwards.

Conditions in the anchorage by this time were far from pleasant. The south-easterly wind had increased to force 8 and was raising a heavy sea. Ships were dropping second anchors and Captain Garnons-Williams states that in any other circumstances he would have ordered all boats to be hoisted. The handling and loading of the landing craft under these adverse conditions was "admirable, and disembarkation continued at full speed." At 0830 the Military Assault Commander, Brigadier Festing, landed.

Sweeping was still continuing in the vicinity of HH, when at 1138, 5th May, the *Auricula* struck a mine and broke her back. As she had no casualties and was in no immediate danger of sinking, she remained where she was, anchored

[1] Leaflets were dropped just before these attacks. In this connection Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks :—"In operations against French possessions, all ideas of using a white flag or dropping leaflets should be abandoned. They do harm and no good, and only cause the Frenchman to consider that his military honour is at stake. The only policy that is sound is to exert the maximum endeavour to destroy his air forces, warships and military works from the start of the operation."

[2] Vohemar airfield (72 miles to the south-eastward of Antsirane) was located by four Fulmars from the *Indomitable* ; but no buildings, aircraft or personnel could be seen there. Four other Fulmars failed to find Ambilobi (60 miles to the southward of Antsirane) and Issessy airfields. These were subsequently found to be landing grounds only.

[3] It was subsequently learned that the parachutist diversion caused the French to despatch troops to this locality before other troops were despatched towards Ambararata.

by her sweep. By this time the sweepers which had done "splendidly"[1] had swept up no less than 35 mines, but half of them were out of action with damage to their gear.[2] As it was imperative to have sufficient minesweepers to sweep the Fleet into Diego Suarez harbour after its capture, Captain Garnons-Williams ordered further sweeping to cease, accepting the consequent delay to the landing craft.

Landing continued throughout the day. Two or three machine-gun attacks were made on the beaches by enemy fighter aircraft, but Fleet Air Arm patrols provided effective protection and, thanks to the initial air blow at the airport, no attacks were made on the transports. After half tide (about 1000, 5th May) White beach—the nearest to the main anchorage—became unsuitable, and Blue beach was brought into use, involving a 2-mile further turn round for the landing craft.

About 1354 an enemy post on Windsor Castle becoming a nuisance was engaged by the *Laforey*.[3] Shortly afterwards a white flag and signals of surrender were observed and the *Laforey* ceased fire, but the British troops, on advancing, were bombed by the French with hand grenades.

Considerable difficulty was experienced in finding a suitable beach for the *Bachaquero* (draught 6 ft. forward, 15 ft. aft), but a spot close to Red beach (centre) was eventually found. She had to approach it through the minefield, but was swept in by the *Cromarty* who cut two mines adrift, and she landed her cargo in 14 minutes. Unfortunately, no practicable route could be found to the main line of advance and the battery was ordered into action on the Andrakaka Peninsula.

At 1500, 5th May, the situation on the beaches was as follows. All the 29th Brigade personnel and nearly all their vehicles had been landed. The 17th Brigade had started to disembark and their motor transport was to follow at 1700. During the afternoon Major-General Sturges arrived from the flagship in a destroyer and, after a consultation in the *Keren*, proceeded ashore.

At sunset[4] landing operations were suspended till sunrise, in order to avoid damage to the landing craft. Before dark destroyers and corvettes[5] took up their stations as anti-submarine patrols off the entrances to the harbour, and orders were given by the S.N.O.(L) to abandon the *Auricula* for the night.

Ashore the day came to a close with No. 5 Commando in occupation of the Andrakaka Peninsula, and the 29th Brigade, on a line about 3 miles south of Antsirane, encountering heavy opposition.

8. Operations of Group I, 4th/6th May, 1942. (Plans 2, 3, 4.)

Meanwhile, outside the harbour the night had passed without incident. Group I (*Ramillies, Indomitable, Illustrious, Hermione* screened by *Paladin, Panther, Lookout, Javelin, Inconstant, Active* and *Duncan*), after the assault

[1] Report of S.N.O. (L). The minesweepers had never before swept in formation as a flotilla ; one ship had never swept before at all. Commander Stephenson, the Senior Officer of the Flotilla, reports that he "cannot speak too highly of the work done by individual ships," but suggests that, in future, for an operation so dependent on the work of the minesweepers, a fully trained and experienced flotilla should be used.

[2] A total of 57 mines were swept during the operation.

[3] This post had been bombed by the *Devonshire's* Walrus, and later by two Albacores and Hurricanes during the forenoon. Nothing had then been seen of the enemy, though subsequent events proved them to have been there all the time.

[4] Sunset, 1731 ; sunrise, 0552, 6th May.

[5] Few specific references to the work of the corvettes will be found in this narrative, since the nature of their duties was not so spectacular as the work of other units. Rear-Admiral Syfret reported that "throughout and subsequent to the operation, whether providing A/S protection or ferrying troops and stores, they carried out their duties in fine spirit and most efficiently."

landing force parted company (4th May), had continued to the north-eastward, the *Hermione* being detached at 1700 to the east coast to carry out her diversion next morning. The remainder patrolled up and down in the vicinity of position AA till 2200, 4th May, when course was shaped towards Nosi Fati, and towards midnight the ships in Group V could be seen bearing 070°, distant 11 miles, steering for position ZC. At 0015, 5th May, land loomed up ahead, and as it was clear that the force was further to the south-eastward than had been anticipated, course was altered to the north-east under the stern of the convoy at 0020.

Shortly before 0300, 5th May, the *Anthony* was sighted. She reported that the channel had been buoyed without difficulty; that at 0015 the *Winchester Castle* was approaching ZC with the remainder of the ships closed up, and that conditions for landing were very good—a report which Rear-Admiral Syfret received with "great relief."[1]

The time had come for the carriers to get to work, and at 0300 they, with the *Paladin*, *Panther*, *Javelin* and *Inconstant*, were detached to operate independently[2] under Rear-Admiral Boyd, some 35 miles west of Cape Amber, while the *Ramillies* with the remaining destroyers kept within visual supporting distance, steering 234°.

The carriers had barely moved off when the first news was received by the Admiral from the ships inshore. It was a signal timed 0318 from the *Laforey* reporting that mines had been cut near JJ. A long pause ensued. About 0440 star shell were seen, which were taken to be from the *Hermione* on the east coast, but "signal communication with ships inshore was poor and undependable" and no further reports came in till 0540. Then came another signal from the *Laforey* reporting no sign of opposition on shore. Further signals from her reported No. 7 battery captured with negligible opposition, native troops surrendering, and the advance continuing; No. 8 battery could not be found and was apparently non-existent, and the situation was under complete control. Considerable delay was experienced in establishing communication with the S.N.O.(L), but at 0722 the Admiral received a signal from him (timed 0716) stating that H.Q., 29th Independent Brigade, had disembarked and floating reserves were landing at White beach; native troops were reported surrendering at Red beach, but mines were delaying the move to the main anchorage. Signals were also received from the *Hermione* and the aircraft carriers, reporting the progress of their activities. In reply to a signal from Rear-Admiral Syfret stressing the importance of all U-Boats being accounted for, the *Illustrious* reported at 0836 that there was none remaining in harbour, and all ships were accordingly warned that there were probably two of them at sea in the vicinity.

At 0719 came a reply by broadcast from the Military Commander of Diego Suarez to the "ultimatum" (*see* Section 5, *ante*) stating that he would defend to the last.[3]

By 0720, 5th May, the Combined Commander-in-Chief "felt that the assault had made a very good start. Troops advancing, prisoners taken, the *Hermione's* diversion had proceeded satisfactorily, and air attacks successful both on the aerodrome and hangar and on ships, including an armed merchant cruiser and a submarine in the harbour. On the debit side it was clear, however, that unswept mines in Courrier Bay were causing delays in disembarkation, and the rejection of my ultimatum by the Military Commander showed that opposition might be expected to stiffen."

[1] On receipt of this report the Admiral informed the Admiralty (at 0314, 5th May) that the operation had begun.

[2] For tasks allotted to the F.A.A. during the assault, *see* Appendix D.

[3] This was followed at 1058, 5th May, by a message in similar strain from the Governor-General at Tananarive.

During the forenoon, though news was somewhat scanty, it seemed clear that the disembarkation was proceeding steadily, and the assault troops advancing to their objectives, though it was evident that resistance on the Antsirane axis was increasing.[1] Rear-Admiral Boyd confirmed that there were no submarines in the harbour, but reported a sloop under way near an H/A battery; she was later attacked by Swordfish from the *Illustrious*, hit forward by a bomb and beached, but remained in action.

At 0950, 5th May, the hospital ship *Atlantis* was seen approaching from seaward, and was led in to the anchorage by a corvette sent out by the S.N.O.(L).

As soon as the 17th Brigade started to land, Major-General Sturges expressed a wish to disembark, and at noon the *Ramillies* shaped course for position ZB; at 1420, 5th May, the General and his staff, accompanied by the Admiral's Chief-of-Staff,[2] were transferred to the *Anthony* for passage ashore. The information in the flagship at this time was that Headquarters, No. 5 Commando, were east of Andrakaka village and advancing with very little resistance. Military reconnaissance from the *Illustrious* had separated our troops 3 miles from Antsirane with tanks leading. The aerodrome, which had again been attacked by aircraft at 1350,[3] was deserted and there were no enemy troops on the road north of Ironomo.

The *Ramillies* then proceeded towards a position some 88 miles to the westward of Cape Amber, being joined by the carriers at sunset. A message from the G.O.C. reported that the attack on the Antsirane position had been held up, but that a fresh assault would be made at daylight. He asked for air support, and this was arranged.

During the night 5th/6th May, Group I cruised in the vicinity of Lat. 12° S. up to 100 miles from Cape Amber. At 0148, 6th May, a situation report timed 2200 the previous evening was received. The 29th Brigade was held up 3½ kilometres south of Antsirane, and it had not been possible to attack the aerodrome. The landing of the 17th Brigade had been delayed by weather, but it was hoped to have them concentrated south of Antsirane by 1100, 6th May. Oronjia Peninsula was to be attacked that afternoon.

On receipt of this signal, the *Devonshire* was ordered to join the *Hermione* to the eastward of Diego Suarez to give supporting fire to the assault on Oronjia Peninsula. At 0400, 6th May, the carriers were detached to carry out flying operations, and the bombing of enemy positions south of Antsirane started at 0500, followed up by machine-gun attacks by Martlets at 0530. A bombing attack was also launched on the aerodrome at first light. Enemy Potez 63 bombers were engaged over the town by fighters from the *Illustrious*, which shot down two for certain, and probably a third. Fighters from the *Indomitable* attacked the sloop *D'Entrecasteaux*, which was firing on No. 5 Commando from her position aground in Andohazampo Cove, and set her on fire.

As it was very uncertain when entry into the harbour of Diego Suarez would be possible, Rear-Admiral Syfret decided to refuel the *Ramillies* and screen[4] after detaching the carriers. They accordingly proceeded to Ambararata

[1] At 0815, 5th May, a French naval officer had been captured and, in accordance with instructions (*see* Section 5), had been sent in his car to Antsirane with a letter demanding surrender. Subsequently, Major-General Sturges described this as "a great error." It was not until this officer arrived with definite information about our main axis of advance that the French gave orders for full defensive measures.

[2] Captain J. M. Howson, R.N.

[3] A subsequent report from R.A. (A) stated that three new fighters—apparently Moranes—were in the hangar and were set on fire.

[4] Subsequently the destroyers with the aircraft carriers were relieved to enable them also to refuel.

Bay, anchoring near position ZD at 0722. Twenty minutes later the *Auricula* broke in two and sank, while attempts were being made by the *Freesia* to tow her to shallow water. No life was lost.[1]

The general situation at 0900, 6th May, was as follows.

The *Devonshire* and *Hermione* were concentrated east of Diego Suarez, and the minesweepers *Cromer*, *Cromarty*, *Romney* and *Nigella* had also proceeded to this area. No report had been received of the progress of the land assault on Antsirane. At 0600 the *Lightning* had bombarded an enemy machine-gun nest which had been re-established on Windsor Castle ; the *Pakenham* also fired a few rounds at this target. The *Laforey* from position JJ was just opening fire on the *D'Entrecasteaux*, which had extinguished the fire caused by the air attack and was still flying her battle ensign.

At 1009 the *Laforey* reported the sloop again on fire, with ammunition exploding. She then joined the *Lightning* near Red beach and with her bombarded a position south of Antsirane.[2]

During the forenoon, 6th May, no information was forthcoming as to the progress of the assault, and it was not until 1250 that the Admiral learnt that it had failed. Of the situation as it appeared that afternoon he says :—

" At about 1400 the General arrived on board. He was hot, begrimed and unhappy. Things were not going well, he said. The 29th Brigade had been held up about 3–5 miles south of Antsirane since the previous afternoon. The enemy held a strong, well-sited defensive position ; they were plentifully equipped with 75-mm. and machine-guns.[3] The 29th Brigade in 30 hours had marched 20 miles and made two ineffective attacks on this position. They were tired and unfit to put into battle again this day. Their casualties were high—25 per cent. over the whole brigade.[4] The 17th Brigade were gradually

[1] Rear-Admiral Syfret subsequently stated that taking into consideration the circumstances at the time and the duties upon which all ships were occupied, he was satisfied that no blame was attributable to anyone for the loss of the ship.

[2] For summary of bombardments, *see* Appendix G.

Two Captains R.A. were allocated as forward observation officers to the ships detailed to support the landing and advance. They were the primary means of target indication and spotting, and carried out these duties " in a very able manner." No cases of confusion occurred between them and the firing ships. Each bombarding ship carried a Captain R.A. as bombardment liaison officer, who interpreted reports and calls for support in action. This rendered it quite unnecessary to have a naval forward observation officer or directing officer ashore. The *Illustrious* was ordered to hold spotting aircraft in readiness for the *Ramillies* and *Hermione* ; to avoid a reduction of air striking forces, it was not intended to provide spotting aircraft for destroyers. As events turned out this would have been most valuable at about 1100/6, to enable the *Laforey* and *Lightning* to engage enemy positions which the forward observation officer was unable to observe. Eventually the *Indomitable* was able to provide an aircraft four hours after it had been requested.

[3] Unfortunately, air photographs taken before the expedition left the United Kingdom stopped short of this final prepared defence line, which was only discovered during the operation.

[4] Actually the situation was better than it appeared. The attack as originally planned was to be carried out by three battalions. The 2nd S. Lancs. on the British right was to advance by night through the mangroves and broken country on the western shore of Baie des Français (*see* Plan 4) and get behind the enemy line, the 1st R. Scots Fusiliers and 2nd E. Lancs. attacking frontally at dawn. Two companies of the 2nd S. Lancs. succeeded in penetrating the enemy lines and established themselves 1,200 yards north of Fort Bellevue, inflicting severe casualties and capturing several hundred prisoners. They eventually got detachments into position about 200 yards behind the enemy trenches. Owing to difficulties of communication, this success, which had great effect on the morale of the enemy command and troops, was not known to Brigadier Festing until 1400, when it was too late to exploit it. In the frontal attack, too, the leading troops of the 1st R. Scots. Fusiliers and the 2nd E. Lancs. got very close to the enemy trenches and continued in action there for the rest of the day, but being cut off by fire from their company and battalion commanders, they were assumed to be casualties.

getting up to the front line, mostly on foot, and the majority should be in position by 1700. He considered that after a two hours' rest they should be ready to go into battle, and he intended they should make a night attack on the enemy position—zero time being 2000. He was emphatic the attack must be carried out before the moon rose at 2300, as the position was too strong to be captured in moonlight or daylight, in the absence of strong artillery support. Any further delay to give the troops longer to rest would be playing into the enemy's hands."

The Admiral offered " any and all assistance " the Fleet could give. The enemy's position was outside the range of the *Ramillies*' and cruisers' guns, but aircraft bombing at zero hour was promised. Then came a suggestion which had a substantial effect. The General asked if it would be possible to put 20 or 30 seamen ashore on Antsirane Peninsula to create a diversion in the enemy's rear ; it was decided to try to land 50 marines there from a destroyer. Assistance might be forthcoming from No. 5 Commando which was in control of Andrakaka Peninsula, but this would depend on their finding boats to cross Port Nievre.

It was then 1430, 6th May ; the party had to be collected, a destroyer told off, and a passage of 100 miles accomplished. The Admiral recommended that the hour for the attack should be put off till 2030. The *Anthony* was called alongside and instructions given to her Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Commander Hodges, and to Captain Price, R.M.,[1] who was to lead the landing party. The General then left the flagship in order to organise the night attack by the 17th Brigade. The 50 marines were embarked in the *Anthony* by 1530—one hour after the decision to make the attempt—and at 1545 she cast off. The Admiral then proceeded to sea in the *Ramillies*, keeping within 45 miles of position ZB in order to facilitate wireless communication with the Army.

The impression left on Rear-Admiral Syfret after the General's visit was that the intended quick capture of Diego Suarez was a 90 per cent. failure. The night attack, planned in a hurry, to be carried out by tired troops against very strong positions, had only a small chance of success. Prolonged operations, which we so much wished to avoid, was the unpleasant alternative. " The *Anthony's* chance of success I assessed as about 50 per cent., my advisers thought 15 per cent., and of the Royal Marines I did not expect a score to survive the night. The next few hours were not happy ones."

Meanwhile the landing on the beaches had continued throughout the day ; the 13th Brigade had followed the 17th Brigade, and a personnel numbering approximately 10,000 men were ashore by 1700, 6th May.

9. Capture of Antsirane, 6th May, 1942. (Plans 2 and 6.)

After leaving Ambararata Bay at high speed the *Anthony* ran into a heavy sea. Most of the marines were sick—a sorry start for the task before them.

Cape Amber was abeam at 1805, 6th May, course was altered to 170° a quarter of an hour later and speed was reduced to 13 knots. Thanks to echo sounding and R.D.F. little difficulty was experienced in making the entrance to Diego Suarez Harbour, and speed was increased to 22 knots at 2001, when 1 mile from the entrance. The ship was apparently unobserved till she was through Oronjia Pass and half a mile to the westward, when fire was opened by Nos. 2, 4 and 5 batteries, and later by No. 1 battery. About 25 rounds were

[1] Captain Martin Price, Royal Marines, H.M.S. *Ramillies*.

fired. The *Anthony* replied briskly with her after 4·7-in. (the two foremost would not bear), the port pom-pom and Oerlikon, and the enemy ceased fire at 2018,[1] when course was altered to 212° short of Nosi Langor.[2]

It had been intended to go alongside the deep water quay, port side to, where it was hoped men from No. 5 Commando would be waiting to help berth the ship. They had failed, however, to find any boats to bring them across from Andrakaka, and in the darkness the jetty was overshot. The *Anthony* turned round and an attempt was made to go alongside starboard side to, but a strong off-shore wind prevented this, so " with supreme skill " Lieut.-Commander Hodges held his stern against the jetty long enough for Captain Price to get his men ashore. Snipers were firing from the jetty and the wooded slopes to the eastward, but a constant stream of bright tracer from pom-pom, Oerlikon, Lewis and Bren guns evidently disconcerted them, and by the time the Marines disembarked the majority had ceased fire. The *Anthony*, having done her part, left at high speed. The batteries at Oronjia opened fire on her, but she was not hit, though some of the rounds fell " rather close." She replied with rapid salvos from the whole gun armament. No. 1 battery continued to fire till she was about 3 miles from the harbour entrance, when course was shaped to the northward to return to Ambararata Bay.[3]

Meanwhile, Captain Price and his Marines—left entirely to their own devices, with no means of retreat—were groping their way south through the dockyard. In spite of fires still burning after the raids by the Fleet Air Arm, it was very dark and they missed the turning to the eastward by which they had meant to enter the town. Progress was delayed by having to spread to avoid heavy casualties from rifle and light machine-gun fire. For some time a high wall on their left forced them to parallel the town, but eventually they found a gap in it and Captain Price led them over a very high bank, " almost a cliff." It was a rough scramble which brought them to a wall and through a stiff wire fence into the compound of the artillery General's house ; Captain Price occupied it with No. 1 platoon, while Lieutenant Powell,[4] with the other, formed another strong point a few hundred yards down the road. Attempts to advertise the diversion by fires had little success as the houses seemed to be under construction and had nothing in them to burn.

Lieutenant Powell soon reached what proved to be the naval depôt. A feeble fire was opened on his party ; they replied with hand grenades, on which the defenders, headed by the Commandant of the barracks, proceeded to surrender. Lieutenant Powell had barely accepted the surrender when the drummer sounded off a call and was immediately " overwhelmed " for his treachery by a posse of marines. The Commandant then explained that the call was the " cease fire." Apologies were made and accepted.

[1] The French did not switch on searchlights, except one which came on at 2023 across Oronjia Pass. The *Devonshire*, which with the *Hermione*, had closed to within 6 miles of the entrance with the express purpose of dealing with searchlights (to assist the *Anthony*), immediately opened fire with her 8-in. guns. At the second salvo, the searchlight was extinguished.

[2] Plan 6.

[3] The *Anthony* was subsequently ordered to meet the *Greystoke Castle*, which was due next morning off Cape Amber with ammunition and stores from Durban, and to escort her to Ambararata Bay. On their arrival there at 0930, 7th May, Captain Garnons-Williams, " in view of the brilliant operation carried out by the *Anthony* the previous evening " arranged for her to pass all ships in the anchorage, who cleared lower decks and cheered her " with great enthusiasm ". Rear-Admiral Syfret, in his despatch, describes her exploit as " a fine achievement, brilliantly carried out, and in my opinion the principal and direct cause of the enemy's collapse."

[4] Lieutenant H. J. Powell, Royal Marines, H.M.S. *Ramillies*.

In the barracks were found three British Army officers, with 50 other ranks, three F.A.A. personnel, and a British agent who was awaiting execution next morning. Two or three thousand rifles and some heavy machine-guns were found at the artillery headquarters.

Captain Price's chief subsequent embarrassment seems to have been the crowds who wished to surrender, both from the naval headquarters and the artillery depot. Rifle and machine-gun fire was opened on his party periodically from the right flank, but this caused no appreciable inconvenience.

Meanwhile, the attack from the south by the 17th and 29th Brigades (the General having finally decided to use both brigades) had commenced at 2030, 6th May. Firing was sporadic until the success signal from the town showed that the Marines had landed ; then the 2nd Royal Scots Fusiliers and the 2nd Royal Welsh Fusiliers pressed home their attack, and by 0300, 7th May, Brigadier Festing was able to report that he was in complete possession of the town and its defences, and had received the personal surrender of the naval and military commanders and their staffs. Rear-Admiral Syfret was of opinion that, on hearing the firing in the town, the men manning the enemy's trenches made for the town to look after their homes and belongings, thus simplifying the task of our troops. Be that as it may, the town was in British hands that night, a result largely due to the success of the hazardous enterprise launched suddenly at the enemy's back door, and to " the splendid leadership and disregard of danger displayed by Captain Price and Lieutenant Powell, the able co-operation and initiative shown by his non-commissioned officers, and the fine qualities displayed by the whole landing party."[1]

By 0800, 7th May, the work of sorting out the prisoners was in full swing.

10. Occupation of Diego Suarez, 7th May, 1942. (Plan 2.)

While affairs at Antsirane were taking this happy turn, Rear-Admiral Syfret was cruising to the south-west of a line 300° from Nosi Fati, while the aircraft carriers to the north-eastward were carrying out flying operations in support of the night attack. The first indication of a possible success reached the Admiral at 2129, 6th May—a signal from the *Anthony* reporting that she had accomplished her task successfully.[2]

No news from the Army came in until 0103, 7th May, when the G.O.C. requested all available ship and air support at 0900 for an assault on Oronjia Peninsula by the 29th Brigade. From this it was clear that the night attack had succeeded, and the *Ramillies* shaped course to join the *Devonshire* and *Hermione* to the eastward of Oronjia Peninsula, in readiness to bombard.

During the night there were two submarine alarms. At 2345, 6th May, the *Genista* reported a contact, 285° 4 miles from Nosi Hara. She attacked with a pattern of 10 depth-charges before losing it at 0111, 7th May ; a search by the *Pakenham*, *Laforey* and corvettes under Captain (D) 19, failed to regain contact.

At early dawn, 0504, 7th May, a Swordfish from the *Illustrious*[3] sighted a submarine—which proved to be *Le Heros*—on the surface off Voailava Point, the northern entrance to Courrier Bay (Lat. 12° 03¾′ S., Long. 49° 03½′ E.) and

[1] Report of Commanding Officer, H.M.S. *Ramillies*, dated 12th May, 1942.

[2] Rear-Admiral Syfret issued a special order of the day, congratulating the *Anthony* and the Royal Marines on their exploit. (*See* Appendix H.)

[3] Two A/S striking forces of three Swordfish each had been flown off at 0440 to operate over the entrance to Diego Suarez and the western anchorage.

immediately sank her with depth-charges. Six officers and 44 ratings were picked up by the *Pakenham* and *Jasmine* 3 hours later some 4 miles west of the position of the attack.[1]

Meanwhile, the *Ramillies* had joined the *Devonshire* and *Hermione* at 0625 ; the squadron formed line ahead in the order *Ramillies*, *Devonshire* and *Hermione*, screened by the *Paladin*, *Panther*, *Lightning* and *Active*, ready to open fire at 0900. Then came a message from the Army stating that the reorganisation of units in Antsirane had necessitated a revised plan, and the 17th Brigade would commence the attack on Oronjia Peninsula at noon. Bombardment was requested as soon as possible after 1000, unless an ultimatum to surrender was accepted by the French. Orders were therefore given to open fire at 1030, but at 1003 came a signal from the G.O.C. reporting that the chances of surrender seemed good and requesting a further postponement of action. The Admiral, however, was averse to keeping the Fleet steaming up and down in dangerous waters, and decided to commence a 15-minute bombardment " to encourage the enemy to surrender."

At 1040, 7th May, fire was opened accordingly at a range of 20,000 to 21,000 yards, in order to keep outside the maximum range (18,000 yards) of the 6·6-in. guns of No. 1 battery, which was engaged by the *Ramillies* and *Lightning*. Spotting aircraft failed to arrive and firing was carried out under very difficult conditions, against targets seen only as the crests of a gently sloping ridge of hills, but despite this handicap out of 23 15-in. shells fired, six fell in the immediate vicinity of the battery and quarters.

Great difficulty was experienced in spotting the fall of the *Lightning's* shot at this long range, and she fired only a few rounds. The *Hermione* fired half a dozen rounds at a battery which she had reported the previous day, but it was in thickly wooded country, and she was unable to identify it with certainty. The *Devonshire* did not fire at all, partly owing to the interpretation placed on signals received from the Army, and partly on account of the Admiral's instructions to conserve ammunition during the preliminary bombardment. Ten minutes after fire was opened, a message that Oronjia Peninsula had surrendered was received, and the bombardment ceased.

This ended the fighting.

By 1620 the four minesweepers which had been standing by since the day before had swept the channel and harbour[2], and at 1700, 7th May, the *Ramillies*, followed by the *Hermione*, *Paladin* and *Lightning*, entered Diego Suarez harbour.[3] A bare 60 hours had elapsed since the initial landing in Courrier Bay.

The slow convoy had already sailed from Ambararata Bay at 1600, 7th May, and the fast convoy followed next morning, both anchoring in Baie des Francais that afternoon. Rear-Admiral Boyd in the *Indomitable* also arrived on the morning of 8th May ; when 7 miles to the eastward of Oronjia Pass she was attacked by a submarine—subsequently identified as the *Monge*—whose torpedo passed 50 yards ahead of the ship. The *Active*, joined later by the *Panther*, carried out two counter-attacks, which the wreckage and oil brought to the surface proved to have been successful.

The *Illustrious* and *Devonshire* remained at sea for a further 24 hours to provide fighter and A/S protection till 0800, 9th May, when they joined the remainder of Force " F " in Diego Suarez bay.

[1] There was no evidence, nor was any information obtained from the survivors to show that *Le Heros* was the submarine attacked by the *Genista* the previous evening.

[2] A 100 per cent. search was necessary as it had been stated by prisoners that the entrance and harbour was mined. This was afterwards proved false.

[3] The *Devonshire*, with the *Panther* and *Active*, had been detached to join R.A.(A), and subsequently to form the escort for the fast convoy.

The many and pressing problems which confronted Rear-Admiral Syfret in the days following the occupation do not fall within the scope of this account. Apart from negotiations with the French regarding the terms of surrender and conditions of occupation, which were settled on 8th May, they included :—

Naval protection of Diego Suarez.
Restoration of town and port to normal conditions.
Unloading of transports.
Disposal of prisoners of war.[1]
Pumping out the dry dock.[2]
Cleaning up the dockyard.
Survey of facilities and defences of the port.
Salvage of guns, etc., from enemy shipping.
Institution of naval base under N.O.I.C.
Dispersal of Force " F."
Re-embarkation and despatch of 13th Infantry Brigade.
Despatch of assault shipping to fetch 22nd East African Brigade.
Supply problems.

All work was greatly hampered by incessant bad weather, which rendered communication between the ships and the shore very difficult, and rapid off oading impossible.

Added to the foregoing, the problem of whether or not to extend the occupation by the capture of Tamatave and Majunga was a source of many conferences and much planning and re-planning, till on 17th May an Admiralty message (2240/16/5) ordered these operations to be abandoned, and the 13th and 17th Brigades to proceed to India as soon as possible.

Difficulties were accentuated by the poor reception of wireless messages, due to bad conditions in that part of the world, increased volume of traffic, and lack of shore facilities.

11. H.M.S. " Ramillies " and S.S. " British Loyalty " torpedoed, 30th May, 1942.

(Plan 7.)

By 24th May, Rear-Admiral Syfret was satisfied that the military and air forces[3] were established securely, and that the naval base and port facilities were running as well as restricted personnel and matériel permitted, though no under-water defences were as yet in existence. All the ships of Force " F," except the *Ramillies*, the three " L " class destroyers and two corvettes, had dispersed to various destinations between 19th May and 23rd May, and the Admiral felt that the time had come to hand over the combined command to the G.O.C. as Fortress Commander. He therefore proposed to the Admiralty on 24th May that he should proceed to Durban in the *Ramillies* escorted by the " L " destroyers. His departure was approved the next day, but the Admiralty at the same time placed the destroyers at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief, Eastern Fleet, who was also made responsible for the allocation of ships to Diego Suarez. Admiral Somerville urgently needed the *Laforey*, *Lightning* and *Lookout*, and at once ordered them to join him at the Seychelles on 1st June, informing Rear-Admiral Syfret that the *Duncan*, *Active*

[1] No instructions were given to Rear-Admiral Syfret regarding the disposal of prisoners of war and enemy wounded. Considerable difficulties subsequently arose over this question, and the Admiral recommends that this problem should be settled before the commencement of any future operation to capture enemy territory.

[2] The German S.S. *Wartenfels* (6,181 tons) was in the dock when the attack opened on 5th May, and scuttled herself there.

[3] About 30 aircraft of the S.A.A.F. had arrived by 13th May, and were established at Antsirane airport under Colonel Melville.

and *Decoy* would arrive at Diego Suarez to replace them on 4th June. This left only two corvettes—the *Thyme* and *Genista*—available for anti-submarine patrols at Diego Suarez between 29th May and 4th June.

At about 2230, 29th May, an aircraft arrived over the harbour and seemed to be about to alight on the water near the *Ramillies*, when it switched on its engine, banked steeply, and flew away making a wrong reply to the challenge. Witnesses agreed that it was a monoplane with two floats, but its identity could not be established. As it might have come from an enemy raider, the *Ramillies* got under way at 0500, 30th May, and steamed round the bay as a precaution against a dawn submarine or air attack, anchoring after sunrise 018° 4 cables from Antsirane lighthouse. During the day enquiries failed to identify the visitor and ships were warned to exercise great vigilance against all forms of attack. Special dawn and dusk reconnaissances to seaward were flown by the S.A.A.F. but nothing suspicious was sighted.

That evening (30th May) the *Ramillies* and the tanker *British Loyalty* were torpedoed.

It was a clear bright night with a full moon. In Oronjia Pass the *Thyme* was on patrol; the *Genista*, at short notice for steam, was at anchor in Port Nievre. Suddenly at 2025 there was an explosion in the *Ramillies*. She had been hit by a torpedo on the port side abreast of "A" turret. Three minutes later the *British Loyalty*, which was anchored 3 cables to seaward of her, reported a submarine on the port beam and opened fire. Depth-charges were dropped in the vicinity at 2040 by the *Ramillies*' picket boat which had been lying ready armed at the lower boom. The *Thyme* and *Genista* also closed and commenced hunting, dropping depth-charges on various contacts. At 2102, in the midst of the explosions of the depth-charges, the *British Loyalty* was hit by a torpedo in the engine room. She was just aweigh at the time, and sank rapidly by the stern, her bows remaining above water.[1]

The hunt was continued throughout the night, but nothing further was seen of the submarine.[2] Meanwhile, the *Ramillies* on being hit had listed 4½° to port; all her lights had gone out, and her draught forward was considerably increased. Her lighting was soon restored and by 2206 she had weighed anchor and shifted berth to the entrance of Port Nievre, where she would be in shallower water should the flooding extend to a dangerous degree. The draught was then 43 ft. forward and 29 ft. aft. The 4-in. H.A. magazine, "A" magazine and shell room and compartments in the vicinity were flooded between bulkheads 42 to 58 above the main deck, and 27 to 42 below the main deck. The compartments 27 to 42 and 58 to 74 above the main deck were also partially flooded.

During the night the flooding was kept well under control and no further leaks developed. On 31st May divers reported a hole about 20 ft. in diameter, extending from about 33 to 43 stations, the highest part being 22 ft. below the forecastle deck. One plate of the bulge, about 20 ft. long, was sticking out on the foremost side of the damage. On this and succeeding days steps were taken to shore up 27 and 58 bulkheads, and to lighten the ship forward in order to reduce the trim by the bow. As both "A" magazine and shell room were flooded, it was decided to disembark all "B" 15-in. shell and cordite, and

[1] It is thought that this torpedo was probably intended for the *Ramillies*.

[2] Two Japanese were rounded up in the country north of Diego Suarez a few days later, and killed by a Commando patrol. Papers found on them indicated that they were the crew of a midget submarine (of which the submarine *120* was parent ship), and made mention of the attack on the *Ramillies* and *British Loyalty*.

6-in. and pom-pom ammunition from the forward magazines and shell rooms into the *Greystoke Castle*, and about 600 tons of oil fuel and various provisions were taken out by the corvettes and destroyers after their arrival.[1]

The *Duncan* and *Active* arrived on 1st June; they at once carried out a thorough search of the harbour, as it was possible the submarine might still be inside, and were then employed as anti-submarine patrols. The following day the *Decoy* arrived with the Fleet Constructor Officer, Eastern Fleet,[2] on board to advise on the general situation. By noon, 3rd June, he was satisfied that everything possible had been done for the security of the main bulkheads[3] and, as the work of patching the hole would have been a matter of weeks or months, Rear-Admiral Syfret decided to sail for Durban that afternoon, where he arrived after an uneventful passage at 1330, 9th June.

12. Lessons learnt

Apart from certain points connected with the planning and political aspects, the recommendations made by the Admiral can be grouped under three main headings:—

Command and staff.
Assault landing and follow-up arrangements.
Communications.

In operation "Ironclad" the rank of the Military Commander was equivalent to that of the Commander-in-Chief. The Admiral emphasises that "at no time during the operation" was "any difficulty on this score whatsoever" experienced; but this happy state of affairs might not always obtain, and he suggests that in future operations arrangements might be made for the Commander-in-Chief to hold a rank higher than that of any officer serving under him.

Certain recommendations are made with regard to the staff of the Commander-in-Chief. The expedition included a number of military officers equipped with specialised knowledge for dealing with the political, civil, administrative, financial and economic problems which would arise after capture, but this the Admiral "only discovered by chance" a day or two before the assault commenced. It would have made for easier and smoother running had they been appointed for duty on his staff until the General was established ashore as Fortress Commander.

The lack of a Press Liaison Officer on the staff to deal with correspondents who accompanied the expedition, or arrived shortly after the landing, made itself felt. "Military" censorship was carried out by officers on the staffs of the Admiral and the G.O.C.; but the need for an officer familiar with Press requirements, and particularly with the intricacies of handling messages, and of censorship from the political—as opposed to the "military" aspect—was at once apparent, and the appointment of such an officer in future operations was strongly advocated.

[1] In response to Rear-Admiral Syfret's request for destroyers or A/S vessels, the following ships were ordered to Diego Suarez:—Destroyers *Duncan* and *Active* by the C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet; corvette *Cyclamen* by C.-in-C., South Atlantic; trawlers *Pladda*, *Shapinsay* and *Hildasay* by Commodore, Durban; destroyer *Decoy*, minesweepers *Cromer*, *Romney*, *Cromarty* and tug *Thames* by Deputy C.-in-C., Eastern Fleet (Rear-Admiral V. H. Danckwerts, C.M.G.), who also sent eight portable pumps, which proved most useful.

[2] Constructor Captain H. S. Pengelly.

[3] Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks:—"The excellent work performed in making the ship seaworthy reflects very great credit on all; in particular, the tireless efforts of the engine room, shipwright and electrical departments are deserving of much praise."

As regards the Senior Naval Officer, Landing, the Admiral recommends that he should be given the rank of Commodore for the period of the final approach and landing operations, and should fly his broad pendant accordingly. Though it was clearly stated, both verbally and in the written orders, that the S.N.O.(L) would carry out the duties of Senior Naval Officer in Ambararata anchorage, doubts occurred in some cases as to who actually was in charge of the naval arrangements such as fuelling, etc. The Admiral recommended that a Captain or Senior Commander should be appointed as Chief Staff Officer, Administration, to S.N.O.(L), who should run the naval side of the anchorage as opposed to the landing operations, and the staff should be increased by a second signal officer, a gunnery officer, a Paymaster-Commander, and for liaison purposes at least three officer messengers, capable of summing up any situation.

The following lessons emerge from the approach and landing operations. All assault shipping should be capable of a speed of at least 16 knots, and should not be of very deep draught. Great advantages are to be gained by the use of M.T. ships with a speed of 16 knots, though this may not be easy to arrange; their speed should not be less than 12½ knots in cases where the use of corvettes and minesweepers enforces a reduction of speed on part of the escort.[1] The *Bachaquero* was a source of embarrassment in planning the approach stage, owing to her slow speed, which was liable to drop to 6 knots or less if head seas were encountered. An expedition containing such craft would almost certainly be detected during the final approach if the enemy maintained any seaward reconnaissance, and all hope of surprise would be lost. The *Derwentdale*, also, was too slow for inclusion with the assault shipping, though her operation of motor landing craft was satisfactory.

Thirty per cent. spare crews for landing craft was found to be quite inadequate. There was no "let up" of boat work during the first ten days, and had the operation taken place in a cold climate, the crews, who were continuously wet to the skin, could not have lasted out.

The minesweepers, considering the number of mines swept, suffered remarkably light casualties. In future operations where the presence of mines is suspected it is very desirable to have some sweepers in reserve. One ship of the main convoy should carry spare minesweeping gear, stowed so that replacements can be readily effected.

Rear-Admiral Syfret remarks that "the requirements of the 'follow-up' convoy are very nearly as important as those of the assault force," and stresses the importance of rapid unloading, especially when within range of enemy air bases. The Fleet requirements are:—

(*a*) Fuel.
(*b*) Victuals.
(*c*) Under-water defences; an indicator net to be laid immediately, followed by the controlled mine and boom gear.
(*d*) Base personnel.
(*e*) Local A/S and M/S craft.

The merchant ship requirements are:—

(*a*) Water and possibly fuel.
(*b*) Labour corps and stevedores for unloading, assuming, as is most probable, that local labour will not be available for some time after occupation.
(*c*) Lighters and large landing craft for unloading, as it is quite possible that the enemy will sabotage all local craft.

[1] The question of speed would be of vital importance on occasions when reasonable enemy air reconnaissance may be expected.

Arrangements should be made for the inclusion of storekeepers and dockyard police, and personnel acquainted with oil fuel installations, pumping plant, electrical power stations, etc., in the "follow-up" convoy, where the operation involves the capture of a naval base.

As in every operation, signal communications formed the crux of the problem and had to deal with a very large amount of traffic. The flagship alone, during the assault and her stay at Diego Suarez, handled an average of 350 messages daily.

The subject may be divided into three categories: viz., during the operation; at the base after capture; and external wireless communication.

It was found that the staff in the *Keren*, both V/S and W/T, was inadequate, and it was suggested that communication ratings destined to form the base staff should take passage in the S.N.O.(L)'s ship, and supplement his staff before and during landing operations. By the time the place is captured they should be no longer needed by the S.N.O.(L).

Difficulties were experienced in the early stages of the operation in establishing wireless communication between the *Keren* and *Ramillies*. This was probably due to discrepancy in tuning. As for reasons of security, this could not be dealt with at the advanced base, it is recommended that as soon as wireless silence is broken at the commencement of an operation a quick check should be made before any message is passed. The delay would be offset by the avoidance of delays in subsequent messages.

Commenting on the control of wireless, the Admiral remarks that the controlling station on any particular wave should be defined in communication orders. Too strict a control should not be exercised, as this may prevent important messages getting through, in the case of wireless operators inexperienced in transmitting on crowded waves.

It was found essential to use plain language extensively in wireless messages, in spite of contrary orders in the "signal instructions." When used with code names the Admiral considered this measure a "reasonable compromise between speed and security." He suggests that, in future, a special operational code similar to the Fleet Code should be instituted for each particular combined operation, for use instead of Syko, Fleet Code and Naval Code.

For communication between the army and headquarter ship, the Army provided their own sets, as all available sets in the *Keren* were manned for naval use. The Army sets are not able to cope with R.D/F. interference, and extra radio interference suppressors should be supplied when force headquarters is embarked in an R.D/F. fitted ship. A special Army radio-telephony broadcast set was also installed in the *Keren*, but was never heard.

Since the Army and Navy attach different significations to indications of priority—resulting in Army messages being given undue priority on naval lines—indications of priority should be defined in the combined operation orders.

With the present wireless equipment it would not be possible to man any additional waves, but if the equipment could be augmented, an air support wave should be introduced. This could be combined with a common Forward Observation Officer's wave for reports and calls for fire—a necessity if situation reports are required from F.O.Os.

After the capture of the base the large number of ships present and the many pressing problems connected with the occupation and restoration of the town, port and base occasioned an immense number of messages between

ships, from ships to shore, and between naval and military shore authorities. Naval wireless communication on the port waves was early established on a satisfactory basis, but the war signal station could not be established for some days owing to its isolated position, the difficulties of laying telephone communication and matters pertaining to food and accommodation.

The principal difficulty, however, was the handling and distribution of messages on shore. This was definitely poor.[1] The initial cause of the difficulties was directly attributable to the fact that so many of the local telephone lines had been cut prior to the occupation, and the necessity for improvising new lines with military resources which were already overtaxed for their own requirements. The other great difficulty was the inadequacy of numbers and training of the V/S personnel sent out with the N.O.I.C.'s party. Fleet signal personnel were landed to assist, but the real lesson is that when planning an operation of this sort, a much more generous allowance of signal personnel, including a signal officer solely for organising shore communication, should be made. Despatch riders and motor cycles should be included in this allowance, as also underwater cable for connecting the flagship with the shore.

The shortcomings of external wireless communications the Admiral describes as " often very embarrassing."

Local receiving conditions were undoubtedly largely responsible, other factors being the added burden thrown on Colombo, Aden and Bombay by the loss of Singapore wireless station, and the African stations being unaccustomed to deal with so much traffic. The services between the Type 65 set installed at the N.O.I.C.'s office and Jacobs and Whitehall stations were eventually established on a satisfactory basis ; but the T.1087 could not be got into working order, despite technical assistance from S.A.A.F. and R.A.F. experts, as well as naval W/T personnel. The Admiral remarks that the importance of being able to establish a medium-power set without delay is obvious, and that it should be possible to send out a complete set, properly packed in hermetically sealed cases, so that it can be erected and got to work in the minimum time.

This threw a large amount of extra transmission on to the flagship,[2] thus causing jambing on reception and consequent delays. The *Ramillies* had become a flagship only a week before leaving Durban ; moreover, she carried no warrant telegraphist. In a period of 29 days, no fewer than 64,456 groups were cleared by her including a report of the operation running to about 4,000 cypher groups—a performance described by the Admiral as being to the credit of all concerned.

One of the most impressive features of the operation lay in the employment of the Fleet Air Arm to obtain command of the air and to support the Army, and the success, on the whole, which they achieved. A lack of training in co-operation with the Army was noticed, however, both by General Sturges and the C.O., *Illustrious*. Such use of the Fleet Air Arm might prove of the greatest importance in operations involving the occupation of enemy territory outside the effective range of shore-based Royal Air Force, and was subsequently referred to by Rear-Admiral Boyd.

[1] It was very often quicker and more effective to transmit business by personal visits to the shore, entailing valuable time spent which could ill be spared in the pressure of work. Moreover, boat-work in such rough seas was at a premium.

[2] This included a considerable number of messages cleared on behalf of the Army the S.A.A.F. and the Press.

13. Conclusion

No mention of the operations of the Army has been made in the foregoing narrative, except in so far as has been necessary to explain the part played by the Navy. An important feature of the operation as a whole must not, on that account, be overlooked : the excellent relations that existed throughout between the Royal Navy, the Army and South African Air Force. " Co-operation at all times between the Services was most cordial," writes the Combined Commander-in-Chief, " and to this must be attributed a great measure of the success of the enterprise. I also wish to record the excellent manner in which H.M. ships, R.F. auxiliaries, and ships of the Merchant Navy[1] carried out their tasks. The enthusiasm and efficiency shown by captains, officers and ships' companies was most gratifying."

The Navy might well be proud of what it had accomplished—the assembly and safe passage of a concourse of shipping from far distant parts of the world ; the skilful navigation culminating in the complete surprise of the defence ; the strenuous work of unloading troops and stores on the open beaches of Courrier Bay ; the complete control of the air by the Fleet Air Arm, and not least the *coup de main* of the *Anthony* and the Royal Marines. Supporting fire for the Army had been provided, and the signal organisation[2] had stood the severe strain of serving a fleet of 46 ships, a division on shore, and some 85 aircraft.

Diego Suarez and with it the Cape Route to the East had been secured. a dagascar had been saved from the fate of Indo-China.

[1] Captain Garnons-Williams described their ship handling as " superb ; " groups composed of ships varying from 20,000 to 5,000 tons anchored accurately in station in the swept channel, and ships' companies vied with each other in their zeal to give every assistance in their power to the landings.

[2] Many of the signal personnel of the assault ships were inexperienced " hostilities only " ratings who had done most of their training during the passage out from the United Kingdom.

APPENDIX A

OPERATION "IRONCLAD"—H.M. SHIPS EMPLOYED

BATTLESHIP

Ramillies (8—15-in. guns) .. Flag, Rear-Admiral E. N. Syfret, C.B., C.-in-C.
Captain D. N. C. Tufnell, D.S.C., R.N.

AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

Indomitable (16—4·5-in. guns) Flag, Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C.
(24 Albacore T.S.R.) Captain T. Troubridge, R.N.
(12 Fulmar fighters.)
(9 Hurricane fighters.)

Illustrious (16—4·5-in. guns) Captain A. G. Talbot, D.S.O., R.N.
(20 Swordfish T.S.R.)
(20 Martlet fighters.)
(1 Fulmar fighter.)

CRUISERS

Devonshire (8—8-in. guns) .. Captain R. D. Oliver, D.S.C., R.N.
Hermione (10—5·25-in. guns) Captain G. N. Oliver, R.N.

DESTROYERS

Pakenham (4—4-in. H.A. guns) Captain E. B. K. Stevens, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N. (D.12).
Laforey (6—4·7-in. guns) .. Captain R. M. J. Hutton, R.N. (D.19).
Lightning (6—4·7-in. guns) .. Commander H. G. Walters, D.S.C., R.N.
Lookout (6—4·7-in. guns) .. Lieut.-Commander C. P. F. Brown, D.S.C., R.N.
Javelin (6—4·7-in. guns) .. Commander G. E. Fardell, R.N.
Inconstant (4—4·7-in. guns) .. Lieut.-Commander W. S. Clouston, R.N.
Active (4—4·7-in. guns) .. Lieut.-Commander M. W. Tomkinson, D.S.C., R.N.
Anthony (4—4·7-in. guns) .. Lieut.-Commander J. M. Hodges, D.S.O., R.N.
Duncan (4—4·7-in. guns) .. Lieut.-Commander A. N. Rowell, R.N.
Paladin (4—4-in. H.A. guns) Commander A. F. Pugsley, R.N.
Panther (4—4-in. H.A. guns) Lieut.-Commander Viscount Jocelyn, R.N.

CORVETTES

Freesia (1—4-in. gun) .. Act. Commander T. G. P. Crick, R.N.
Fritillary (1—4-in. gun) .. Lieut.-Commander W. Hamilton Barker, B.D., R.N.R.
Genista (1—4-in. gun) .. .. Lieut.-Commander R. Pattinson, D.S.C., R.N.R.
Cyclamen (1—4-in. gun) .. Lieutenant A. G. Scott, R.N.R.
Thyme (1—4-in. gun) .. .. Lieutenant H. Roach, R.N.R.
Jasmine (1—4-in. gun) .. Lieut.-Commander C. D. B. Coventry, R.N.R.

MINESWEEPERS

Cromer (1—3-in. H.A. gun) .. Commander R. H. Stephenson, R.N.
Poole (1—3-in. H.A. gun) .. Lieutenant W. L. G. Dutton, R.N.R.
Auricula (1—4-in. gun) .. Lieut.-Commander S. L. B. Maybury, R.N.
Nigella (1—4-in. gun) .. .. Lieutenant L. J. Simpson, R.N.R.
Romney (1—3-in. H.A. gun) .. Commander R. H. V. Sivewright, D.S.C., R.N. (ret.).
Cromarty (1—3-in. H.A. gun) Lieut.-Commander C. G. Palmer, D.S.C., R.N.Z.N.V.R.

ASSAULT SHIPS

Keren .. .. Act. Captain G. A. Garnons-Williams, D.S.C., R.N.
S.N.O.(L).
Karanja .. .. .. Commander C. Naylor, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N. (ret.).
Royal Ulsterman .. .. Act. Lieut.-Commander W. R. K. Clark, R.D., R.N.R.
Winchester Castle .. .. Captain S. B. F. Newdigate, Master.
Sobieski .. .. Captain Z. Knoetgen, Master.

APPENDIX A—*contd.*

PERSONNEL SHIPS

Oronsay .. .. Captain R. W. Roberts, D.S.C., O.B.E., Master.
Duchess of Atholl .. .. Commander H. A. Moore, R.D., R.N.R.
Franconia .. .. .. Captain J. Bertenshaw, Master.

M.T. SHIPS

City of Hong Kong .. .. Commander H. L. Walton, O.B.E., R.D., R.N.R.
Mahout .. .. Captain L. Robertson, Master.
Thalatta .. .. .. Captain Ole Lersbryggen, Master.
Empire Kingsley .. .. Captain G. R. Cobb, O.B.E., Master.
Nairn Bank .. .. .. Captain J. W. Greig, Master.
Martand .. .. Captain J. F. Butterworth, Master.

TANK LANDING SHIP

Bachaquero .. .. .. Act. Lieut.-Commander A. W. McMullan, R.N.R. (ret.).

R.F. AUXILIARIES

Easedale (oiler) .. .. Captain F. G. Drake, Master.
Derwentdale .. .. .. Captain J. M. Humphrey, Master.

HOSPITAL SHIP

Atlantis .. .. Captain H. P. Womersley, O.B.E., Master.

APPENDIX B

MILITARY FORCES

1. *H.Q.*
   H.Q., 121 Force.
   A.L. and Sup. Det.
   29 F.S. Sec.
   Det. 15 M.C. Gp.
   F.O.O.s and B.L.O.s.

2. *R.E.*
   H.Q. R.E., 121 Force.
   1 Sec. 236 Fd. Coy.
   Det. 13, Sec. 139, M.E. Coy.
   Det. 991, Docks Op. Coy.

3. *Sigs.*
   H.Q., Sigs., 121 Force.
   Det. "Z" H.Q., Sigs. (incl. Dets. 45 W/T Sec. and 4 W/T Sec.).
   B/2 Beach Sec.

4. *Inf.*
   5 Commando.

5. *S. and T.*
   H.Q., R.A.S.C., 121 Force.
   121 Issue Depot, E.F.I.
   55 D.I.D., 121 R.A.S.C. Det.

6. *Medical*
   H.Q., R.A.M.C., 121 Force.
   154 Fd. Amb.
   5 Fd. Hospital.

7. *Ord.*
   H.Q., R.A.O.C., 121 Force.
   1 Beach Ord. Det.
   Workshop Det., 121 Force.
   1 Bty., 52 Hy. A.A. Regt. and R.A.S.C. Pl.
   Det. Workshop Pl. and Sig. Sec.
   13 I.B.G. Coy, R.A.S.C.
   17 F.S. Sec.
   5 Div., Postal Unit.
   Sec. 5, Div. Pro. Coy.

8. *Pay*
   Det. 2 Comd., Pay Office.

9. *Pro.*
   1 Sec., 200 Pro. Coy.

10. *Pnr.*
    H.Q., 5 Pnr. Gp.

11. 29 *inf. Bde. Group*
    H.Q., 29 Inf. Bde.
    Def. Platoon.
    Bde. Sig. Sec.
    1 R.S.F.
    2 R.W.F.
    2 E. Lan. R.
    2 S. Lan. R.
    "B" S.S. Sqn., R.A.C. (6 Valentines, 6 Lt., Mk. VII).
    455 Lt. Bty., R.A. (4—3·7-in., 2—25-pdr.).
    145 Lt. A.A. Tp., R.A.
    236 Fd. Coy., R.E. (less 1 Sec.).

12. 17 *inf. Bde. Group*
    H.Q., 17 Inf. Bde.
    Def. Platoon.
    Bde. Sig. Sec.
    L.A.D.
    2 R.S.F.
    6 Seaforths.
    2 Northamptons.
    9 Fd. Regt., R.A.
    Sig. Sec.
    L.A.D.
    38 Fd. Coy.
    141 Fd. Amb.

APPENDIX C

Letter to the Governor of Diego Suarez
(Translation)

On Board the British Flagship

3rd May, 1942.

Your Excellency,

The strategic position of Diego Suarez requires that it should not fall into the hands of the Japanese and that the territory should be available for those forces which are fighting to restore freedom in the world and secure the liberation of France and French territory. It cannot be allowed to suffer the fate of Indo-China.

I therefore request that in order that bloodshed may be avoided you will surrender the territory under your control to me unconditionally and instruct your officials and armed forces to obey the orders which I shall issue.

The action which I am now taking on the instruction of H.M. Government has the full approval of the Government of the United States.

In order to assist you in reaching a favourable decision, I have been instructed by H.M. Government to inform you of the following :—

(1) Diego Suarez is French and will remain French, and will be restored to France after the war. H.M. Government have repeatedly made it clear that they do not covet an inch of French territory. I repeat this assurance.

(2) Funds will be made available to meet the salaries and pensions of all personnel, civil and military, who elect to co-operate with the United Nations.

(3) If any civil and military employees do not wish to co-operate, they will, provided they can claim the right to residence in Metropolitan France, be repatriated as and when shipping becomes available.

(4) The trade of Diego Suarez with the United Nations will be restored. H.M. Government will extend to Diego Suarez all the economic benefits accorded to French territories which have already joined the United Nations.

(5) There must be no destruction of civil and military installations, W/T stations war stores, etc. Those responsible for any such sabotage will not benefit by conditions (2) and (3) above.

Your reply to this communication should be sent to me immediately in plain language by radio on 500 kc/s (600 metres), using call sign GBXZ.

Alternatively, it should be sent by the hand of an officer under flag of truce, to the Officer Commanding Occupying Troops.

I am, Your Excellency,

(*Sgd.*) E. N. SYFRET.

Rear-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief
British Forces.

To His Excellency,
The Governor of Diego Suarez.

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF FLEET AIR ARM TASKS

Task.	Ship Allocated.
A. Immobilisation of local French Air Forces	*Indomitable.*
B. Immobilisation of French U-Boats	*Illustrious.*
C. Fighter protection for :—	
(*a*) Military landing	*Illustrious.*
(*b*) Transports	
(*c*) Group I	*Indomitable.*
(*d*) Town patrol	
D. Tactical reconnaissance (military)	*Illustrious.*
E. Air support for military	
F. A/S patrols	*Indomitable.*
G. Air spotting for bombardment	*Devonshire.* *Illustrious.*
H. Seaward reconnaissance and stand-by striking force	*Indomitable.*
J. Dummy parachute landing	*Illustrious.*

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF FLYING OPERATIONS, 5th to 7th MAY, 1942.

(H.M. Ships *Indomitable* and *Illustrious.*)

Task.	Number of Aircraft.	Remarks.
Fighter patrols	130	Six fighters maintained all day over the town, transports and carriers ; additional sections occasionally. *Result* :—Four Morane fighters certain, two Potez bombers certain, 11 probable—all shot down by Martlets. One Martlet missing. As far as known, no damage or casualties caused by enemy air action.
A/S patrols	51	Two aircraft maintained all day on carriers and transport anchorage ; two aircraft over harbour a.m. 5th May. Before dawn searches, 6th and 7th May. *Result* :—One submarine sunk at sea by search aircraft.
Searches	6	To eastward of Diego Suarez, 6th and 7th May.
Against harbour	37	Probable armed merchant cruiser torpedoed and sunk. Sloop attacked with torpedoes ; no hits. Later bombed ; then beached. Finally set on fire by Hurricanes. Submarine bombed and sunk.
Army Support	85	Antsirane airport bombed and machine-gunned three times. Estimated seven aircraft destroyed. Defence positions south of Antsirane bombed and front machine-gunned dawn, day, and night, 6th May. Vohemar and Ambilobe landing grounds visited twice ; no aircraft seen. Tactical reconnaissance carried out each day.

British losses	Two Swordfish, one Fulmar, one Martlet shot down. Three Swordfish, one Fulmar, one Albacore, other causes.
Missing	Five officers, two ratings.
Total aircraft operated	*Illustrious*, 160 ; *Indomitable*, 149.

APPENDIX F

PERSONNEL AND STORES LANDED ON THE COURRIER BAY BEACHES, 5th to 6th MAY, 1942.

Red beach	Personnel, about 800–900. Vehicles and guns, 54. Stores, about 40 tons.
Green beach	Personnel, about 650.
White beach	Personnel, about 1,200–1,500. Vehicles and guns, about 25.
Blue beach	Personnel, about 11,000. Vehicles, 242. Guns, 18. Petrol, 92 tons. Water, 30 tons. Ammunition, 280 tons. Food, etc., 115 tons. R.E. stores, 30 tons. Medical, 3 tons.

These totals exclude about 200 tons of G.1098 ammunition and unit stores.

About 20–30 tons were transferred from Blue to Red beach during the operation.

APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF BOMBARDMENTS

Time and Date	Ship (A) At anchor (U) Under way	Gun	Rounds Fired (D) Direct (I) Indirect	Target	Observation	Range (yards)
0644/5	*Hermione* (U)	5·25-in.	25 (D)	No. 1 battery ..	Direct ..	16,000–19,000
1430/5	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	29 (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	6,000
1550/5	*Cromarty* (A) ..	3-in.	4 (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	5,000
1550–1658/5	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	36 (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	6,000
1732/5	*Lightning* (A) ..	4·7-in.	— (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	6,000
0606/6	*Lightning* (A) ..	4·7-in.	— (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	6,000
0700/6	*Pakenham* (A)	4-in.	5 (D)	Windsor Castle	Direct ..	6,000
0855/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	86 (I)	*D'Entrecasteaux*	F.O.O.	15,000
0935–1014/6	*Hermione* (U)	5·25-in.	82 (D)	No. 1 battery ..	Direct ..	20,000–21,000
0953–1056/6	*Lightning* (A) ..	4·7-in.	— (I)	Area	F.O.O.	20,000
1049–1057/6	*Hermione* (U)	5·25-in.	32 (D)	No. 1 battery	Direct ..	13,000–19,000
1101/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	7 (I)	Area	F.O.O.	20,000
1125–1300/6	*Devonshire* (U)	8-in.	— (I)	Nos. 1 and 2 batteries and Mamelon Vert.	Walrus	20,000
1130–1208/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	30 (I)	Area	F.O.O.	20,000
1221–1233/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	38 (I)	Area	F.O.O.	20,000
	Lightning (A) ..	4·7-in.	— (I)	Area	F.O.O.	20,000
1235–1304/6	*Hermione* (U)	5·25-in.	13 (D)	No. 2 battery	Direct and S.A.	18,000–20,000
1330/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	8 (I)	Area	Naval F.O.O.	20,000
1618–1705/6	*Laforey* (A) ..	4·7-in.	58 (I)	Field battery ..	Aircraft	20,000
2010/6	*Anthony* (U) ..	4·7-in.	24 (D)	C.D. batteries ..	Direct ..	Various.
2023/6	*Devonshire* (U)	8-in.	8 (D)	Searchlight ..	Direct ..	10,000
1042–1053/7	*Ramillies* (U) ..	15-in.	24 (D)	No. 1 battery ..	Direct ..	20,000
	Hermione (U)	5·25-in.	6 (D)	Suspected battery.	Direct ..	21,000
	Lightning (U) ..	4·7-in.	— (D)	No. 1 battery area.	Direct ..	19,000

Note :—The outstanding features of the bombardments were the accuracy of the long-range direct fire of the *Ramillies* (*see* Section 10, *ante*) and the suitability of the " L " class destroyers for carrying out indirect bombardments when at anchor, due to their modern equipment, particularly the " P " sight. Firing across 4 miles of fairly high ground the *Laforey* scored several hits on the beached sloop *D'Entrecasteaux*, and indirect shoots at extreme range by her and the *Lightning* were of material assistance to the Army.

APPENDIX H

The following Order of the Day was issued to the Commanding Officers, H.M. Ships of Force " F," dated 8th May, 1942, on board H.M.S. *Ramillies* :—

On Wednesday the Army found themselves held up outside Antsirane by a strongly held defensive position. Progress was slow and costly, the situation caused some anxiety.

2. To assist in the capture of Antsirane it was necessary at very short notice to send H.M.S. *Anthony* (Lieutenant-Commander J. M. Hodges), with 50 Royal Marines, under Captain Martin Price, embarked from H.M.S. *Ramillies*, to enter Diego Suarez harbour in the dark and attack the town in reverse.

3. *Anthony's* task was most hazardous and demanded skill, courage and determination of the highest order.

4. To the Royal Marines was entrusted a task requiring supreme self discipline, courage and unselfish devotion to duty.

5. *Anthony* carried out her work with a stout heart and splendid efficiency, such as I have come to expect of her.

6. The Royal Marines performed their duty with complete success, and the G.O.C. has told me that this enterprise took the enemy completely by surprise and was a determining factor in the enemy's collapse.

7. The work of *Anthony* and of the Royal Marines was worthy of the best traditions of the Navy and of the Royal Marine Corps.

(*Sgd.*) E. N. SYFRET,
Rear-Admiral.

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(C49892) 500 11/43

UAREZ- 5-7 MAY 1942
OF FORCES
, of Ships taking part shewn in Red.
ons at dawn 5 May, shewn in Green.
100°
120°
140°
160°
60°
50°
40°
30°
20°
10°
0
10°
20°
30°
40°
Okhotsk
Sakhalin I.
Kuril I.
Vladivostok
Hokkaidō
Peiping
Seoul
JAPAN ISLANDS
Nanking
Shanghai
Marcus
Formosa
Hong Kong
Marianas or Ladrones
Rangoon
Bangkok
PHILIPPINES
Guam
Palau
Caroline
Sumatra
Borneo
New Ireland
NEW GUINEA
Approximate limit reached by Japanese 6/5/42
Timor
Darwin
AUSTRALIA
Brisbane
Perth
Albany
Sydney
Adelaide
Melbourne

CAPTURE OF DIEGO SUAREZ. 5-7 MAY 1942

ASSEMBLY OF FORCES

Approximate Positions, 20 March, of Ships taking part shewn in Red.
Assembly at Durban, and Positions at dawn 5 May, shewn in Green.

Illustrious
Convoy WS 17
Convoy OS 23
Pakenham
Lookout
Javelin
Inconstant

Corvoy O.S.22
Cyclamen

FORCE H
Malaya ⊕
Hermione
Laforey
Lightning
Active
Duncan
Anthony

Devonshire

Cromer
Poole
Thyme

Romney
Cromarty
Genista

Indomitable

Hermes
(sunk 9/4)

Ramillies

Auricula

Nigella

Freesia
Fritillary
Jasmine

Bachaquero

Indomitable
Panther
Paladin
joined 3/5

3/5 FORCE
5/5/42 EASTERN FLEET

Paladin
Panther

Catalina
Patrol 3/5-9/5

Catalina
Patrol 20/4-6/5

20/4-29/4/42
FORCE F
Ramillies ⊕
Illustrious
Devonshire
Hermione
6 Destroyers
6 Minesweepers
6 Corvettes
Convoys WS 17A/B

Approximate limit reached by Japanese 6/3/42

HUDSON BAY
NORTH AMERICA
SOUTH AMERICA
EUROPE
AFRICA
ASIA
AUSTRALIA
JAPAN ISLANDS
NEW GUINEA
PHILIPPINES
Caroline
Marianas or Ladrones
Marcus
Sakhalin I.
Kuril Is.
Hokkaido
Okhotsk
Vladivostok
Peiping
Nanking
Shanghai
Hong Kong
Formosa
Calcutta
Bombay
Madras
Rangoon
Bangkok
Colombo
Maldive
Chagos Arch.°
Seychelles
Zanzibar
Mozambique
Majunga
Diego Suarez
Tamatave
Mauritius
Reunion
Durban
P.Nolloth
Cape Town
Walvis B.
Benguela
Mossamedes
St. Helena
Ascension
Tristan da Cunha
Lagos
Freetown
St. Leone
Bathurst
C. Verde Is.
Canary Is.
Madeira
Azores
Lisbon
Gibraltar
Algiers
Tunis
Malta
Tripoli
Marseilles
Rome
Istanbul
Smyrna
Odessa
Batum
Baku
Basra
Bahrein
Jidda
Suakin
Alexandria
Cairo
Suez
Aden
Stockholm
Riga
Edinburgh
Dublin
London
Amsterdam
Paris
Hudson Bay
Quebec
Ottawa
Boston
New York
Washington
Halifax
St. Johns
Charleston
New Orleans
Bermuda
Martinique
Trinidad
Georgetown
Para
Belem
Cocos
Galapagos
Guayaquil
Callao
Recife
Baia
Rio de Janeiro
Trinidad
Florianopolis
Valparaiso
Buenos Aires
Magellan Strait
Sumatra
Borneo
Timor
New Ireland
Darwin
Perth
Albany
Adelaide
Melbourne
Sydney
Brisbane
Palau
Guam

C.B. 3081(9) (B.S. N°16)

Produced under the Superintendence of Vice-Admiral Sir John Edgell, K.B.E., C.B., F.R.S., Hydrographer.

SECRET

THE CAPTURE OF DIEGO SUAREZ

5TH – 7TH MAY 1942

General Chart showing route of approach to William Pitt & inner Bays

Approximate positions of shore defence batteries are shown thus:- ●

S/M. Le Heros sunk 0504/7/5

INITIAL ANCHORAGE

MAIN ANCHORAGE

ASSAULT LANDINGS 0430/5/5

Auricula mined 1140/5/5

4 – 6·5" Guns

4 – 12·6" Guns (old)

4 – 3·9" Guns

4 – 3·9" (old)

Anthony Lands Marines 2050/4/5

Bombardment by Battleships 1040/5/5

S/M. Le Heros sunk by F.A.A. 0500/5/5

Diversion by Hermione, 0430/5/5

Aerodrome

WILLIAM PITT FOR ANDRAMAHIBABAY

ANDROMACHE ISLANDS

BEPOTAKA BAY

ANDRANOAOMBI BAY

DIEGO SUAREZ BAY

MADAGASCAR – NORTH COAST

DIEGO SUAREZ BAY to ANDRANOAOMBI BAY

FROM THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT CHARTS CORRECTED TO 1910-11.

with some additions & corrections from Surveys by Captain W.F.W.Owen, R.N. 1824.

Tidal Information.

Place	Lunitidal Intervals H.W.F.& C.	L.W.F. &C.	Height above datum of soundings Mean H.W. Springs	Mean H.W. Neaps	Mean Tide Level	Datum to which Soundings are reduced.
Diego Suarez Bay	7h 34m		7·2 feet	6·6 feet	4·1 feet	
Ambaraina Bé	7h .. m		3·5	2·9	1·8	
Courcousse	7h .. m		3·5	2·9	1·8	
Andranoaomby	6h .. m		3·5	2·9	1·8	

cst. coral, g. gravel, gy. grey, m. mud, r. rock, s. sand, sh. shells, st. stones.

All heights are expressed in feet above High Water Springs.

All Bearings are True (from 126°E.) and are given from Seaward.

SOUNDINGS in FATHOMS

Table for Conversion of FATHOMS – METRES

Fathoms	Metres	Fathoms	Metres	Fathoms	Metres
1	1·8	41	75·0	81	148·2
2	3·7	42	76·8	82	150·0
3	5·5	43	78·7	83	151·8
4	7·3	44	80·5	84	153·7
5	9·1	45	82·3	85	155·5
6	11·0	46	84·2	86	157·3
7	12·8	47	86·0	87	159·1
8	14·6	48	87·8	88	161·0
9	16·5	49	89·7	89	162·8
10	18·3	50	91·5	90	164·6
11	20·1	51	93·3	91	166·5
12	22·0	52	95·2	92	168·3
13	23·8	53	97·0	93	170·1
14	25·6	54	98·8	94	172·0
15	27·4	55	100·5	95	173·8
16	29·3	56	102·4	96	175·6
17	31·1	57	104·2	97	177·5
18	32·9	58	106·0	98	179·3
19	34·8	59	107·8	99	181·1
20	36·6	60	109·7	100	183·0
21	38·4	61	111·5		

Longitude East 49° from Greenwich

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Reprinted 1940

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BASED ON ADMIRALTY CHART 1002 (photo reduced)

PLAN. 3

40' 50' 48°E 10' 20' 30' 40' 50' 48°E 10' 20' 30' 40' 50' 50°E

50'
12°S
10'
20°
30'
40'
50'
13°S
10'
20'

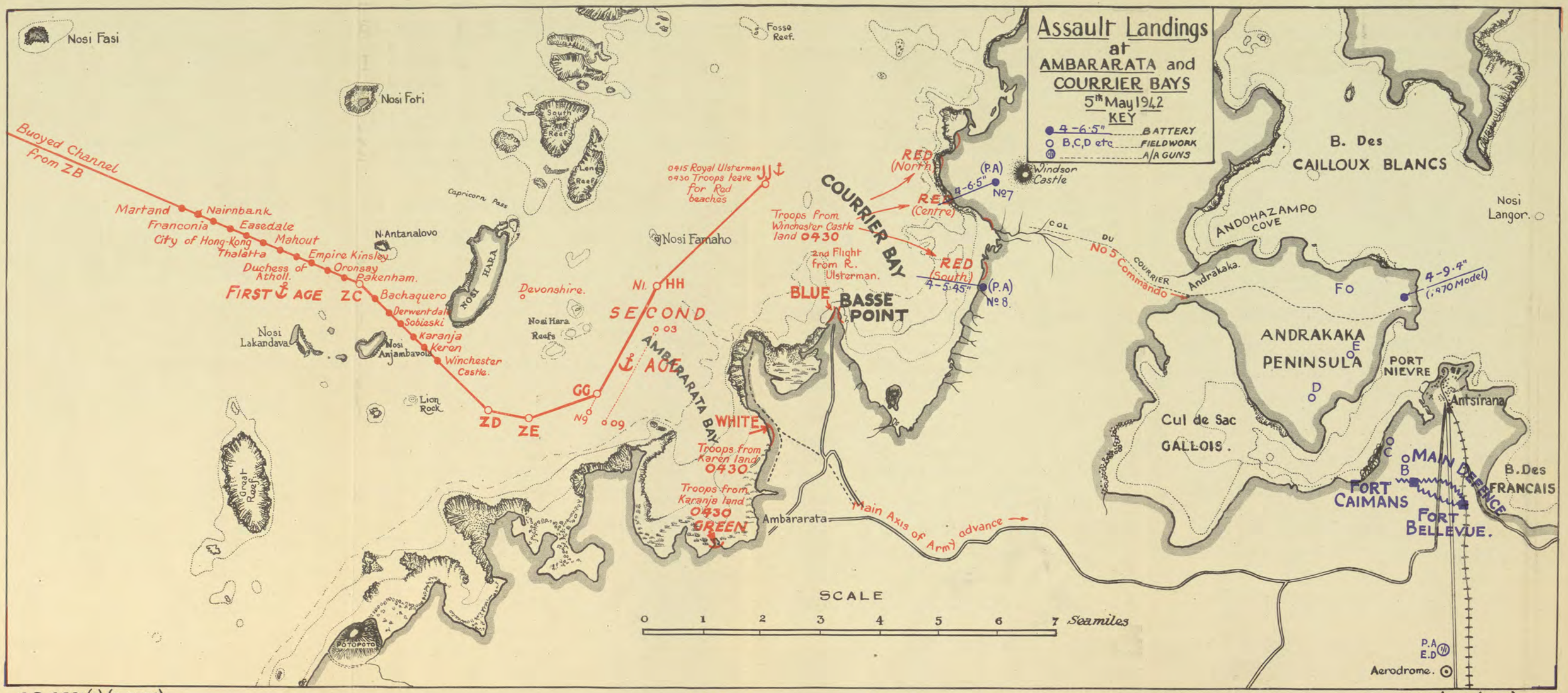
Group I (patrolling)
AA
W
Dispersal Point P.M. Day-1 (4/5/42)
Groups II-V
Channel buoyed by Laforey
Voailava Pt.
CAPE AMBER
ZB
N.FASI
N.FATI
N.HARAM
Courrier Bay
DIEGO SUAREZ BAY
ZA
ZC
Destroyers Landfall
NOSI ANAMBA
Ambararata B.
Ambodi Vahibe Bay
Diversion by Hermione, Dawn, Day I. 5/5/42.
C. St. SEBASTIAN
MADAGASCAR

Capture of Diego Suarez
5-7 MAY 1942
FINAL APPROACH
TO COURRIER BAY.
4-5/5/1942

C.B.3081 (9) (B.S.16)
7341

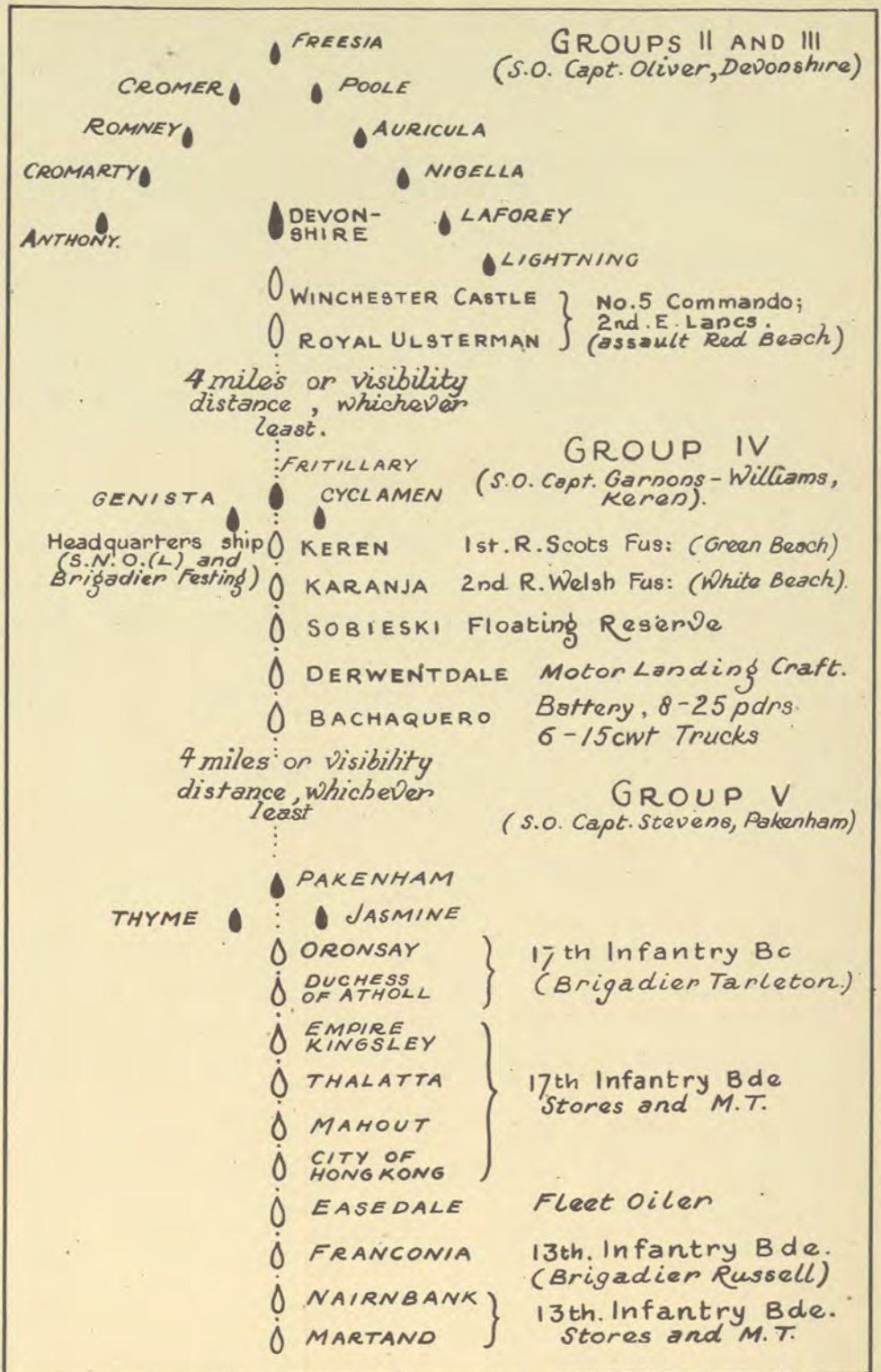
TSD/HS(311)

PLAN 4.



C.B. 3081(9) (B.S.16)
7341

TSD/HS (312)



C.B. 3081 (9) (B.S. 16)

PLAN 5

TSD/HS(315)

FINAL APPROACH; CRUISING ORDER

(Not to scale)

7341

PLAN 6

Capture of Diego Suarez.

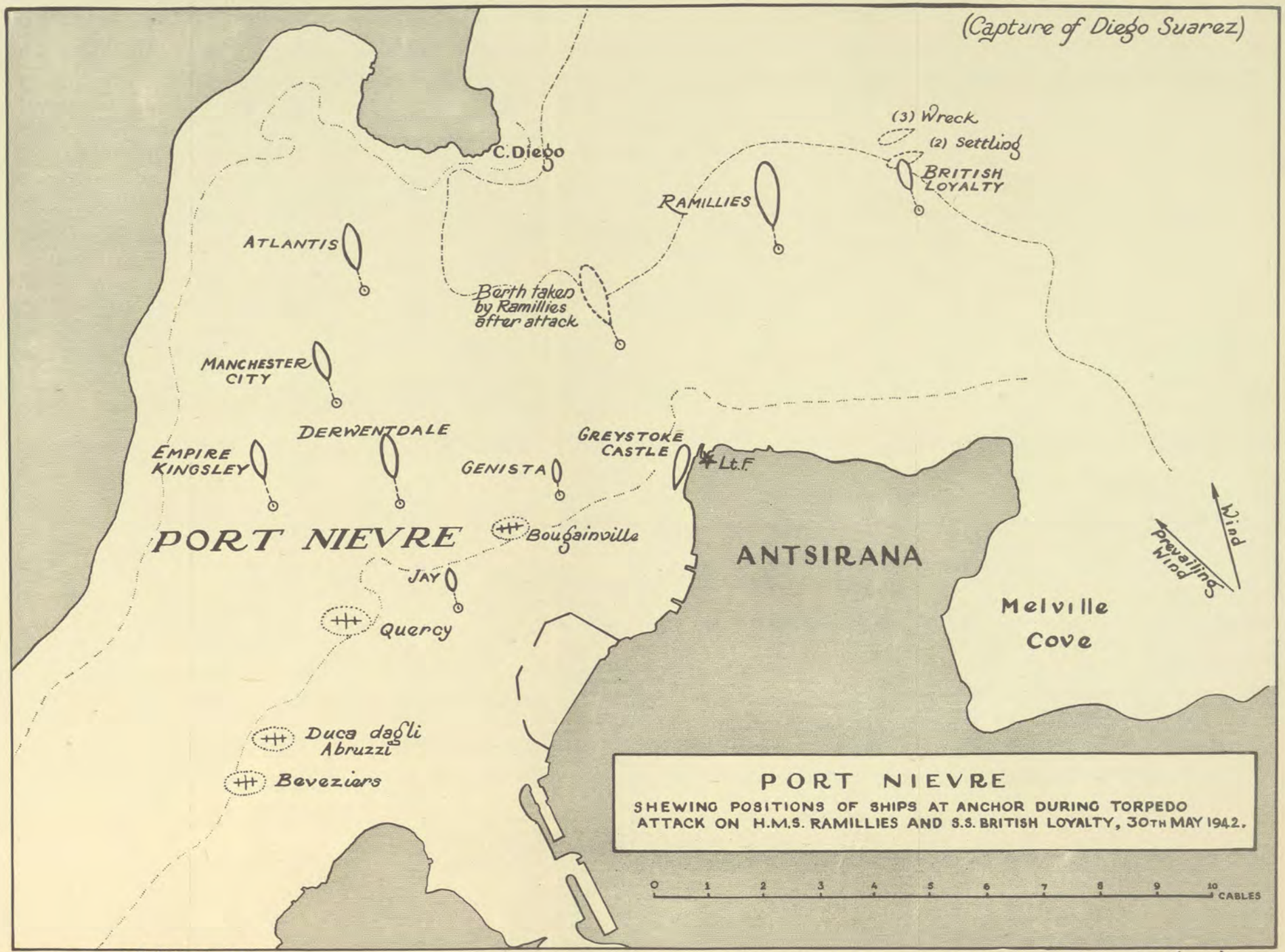
C.B. 3081(9)(B.S.16)

7341

TSD/HS(313)

PLAN 7

(Capture of Diego Suarez)



C.B.3081(9)(B.S.16)

7341

TSD/HS(329)

LIST OF BATTLE SUMMARIES ISSUED

	Battle Summary No.	
C.B. 3081 (1)	1	Operations at Oran, 3rd–6th July, 1940.
	2	Action off Cape Spada, Crete, 19th July, 1940.
	3	Attack on *Richelieu*, Dakar, 8th July, 1940.
C.B. 3081 (2)	4	Operations, Crete, 20th May–1st June, 1941.
C.B. 3081 (3)	5	Operations against *Bismarck*, 23rd–27th May, 1941.
C.B. 3081 (4)	6	Bardia, Bombardments, 1940–41.
	7	Genoa, Bombardment, 9th February, 1941.
	8	Action off Cape Calabria, 9th July, 1940.
C.B. 3081 (6)	9	Action off Cape Spartivento, 27th November, 1940.
	10	Attack on Taranto, 11th November, 1940.
C.B. 3081 (7)	11	*Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, 12th February, 1942.
	12	St. Nazaire, 28th March, 1942.
C.B. 3081 (5)	13	Actions with Enemy Disguised Raiders, 1940–1941.
C.B. 3081 (8)	14	Loss of H.M. Ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, 10th December, 1941.
C.B. 3081 (9)	15	Naval Operations off Ceylon, 29th March–10th April, 1942.
	16	Naval Operations at the Capture of Diego Suarez (Operation "Ironclad"), May, 1942.